

The Redeemer



*The Presiding Bishop's
Book for Lent*

1937

BY VARIOUS AUTHORS

Issued under the direction of

*James De Wolf Perry
Presiding Bishop*



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THE REDEEMER

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¶ This book was edited for the Presiding Bishop by Bernard Iddings Bell, Canon of Providence.

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The Redeemer
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Ash Wednesday

“THE WHOLE CREATION
GROANETH AND TRAVAILETH”

READING: Romans 8:18-28

VIEW THE EARTH AT ANY MOMENT IN THE FLIGHT OF TIME, and there appears the picture of creation waiting for redemption: In the realm of nature, there is ceaseless warfare between low and higher forms of life; in the dawn of history, the brother's blood (of Abel) cries from the ground; in the long ascent of man, the motions of his spirit hope for release. One need not turn to St. Paul to be reminded of the universe “groaning and travailing in pain together until now.” It is the tale of human experience.

See again the same world-scene throughout the ages from the other, the divine, point of view. God looks out upon that world, to “*find it good*”: good not in completed fact, but in patient and undeviating purpose. Every word or act by which God manifests Himself shows the story of creative power, fulfilled at last in redemptive love.

Redemptive compassion is more than an *attribute* of deity. Redemptive compassion is of the very *essence* of God. That throws a light on problems otherwise unsolved. Why then has it so often failed to gain and hold a central place in the thought and faith of believers? Many answers to this question may be given. One only is sufficient. God's redemption of mankind, like every other act of the Creator for His creature, has become obscured by systems of doctrine which have been devised to justify or to explain it. One must look beyond Christian dogma to find the fullness of the meaning of redemption in the person of our

Lord. Through a sense of His presence, an apprehension of His life and death, a moral experience gained through faith in Him, the fact of redemption glows with light that shines from the face of Jesus Christ.

It is in this aspect, especially, that Christ is made known to those who enter, with Him, the season of Lent.

Were "the need of a world of men" satisfied by the contemplation of a sinless life, it would be sufficient to dwell in companionship with the Galilean Jesus; to share with Him, in nights of prayer, "the silence of eternity interpreted by love"; to "walk with Him in lowly paths of service free"; to hear, and take to heart, the Gospel of the Kingdom, spoken on the mountain-side. The Incarnation, if it revealed these things alone, would have left us no more than the tradition of an Eastern mystic and teacher of righteousness. We should have had a Christian calendar without Lent, a Gospel without the Cross. Such a Revelation of Reality was, and is, as much as some devout followers of the Master have been able to understand and willing to accept. But such a Gospel is not enough today, as it was not enough when the Spirit drove the Son of God into the wilderness to tread the paths where a bewildered world had lost its way. The struggle for salvation begins on a battleground between self-indulgence and self-denial, between self-aggrandizement and humility, between world-conquest and self-conquest.

Every encounter with the Evil One, whether in days of temptation in the wilderness, or in times of inner trial among the throngs of suffering humanity, or in lonely nights of inward struggle, can be won only by prayer and fasting, only in anguish and in triumph.

The secret of sinlessness, found in Him who was "tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin"—the price of perfection, paid by the One who enjoined perfection as God Himself is perfect: these were not for the sake of individual

achievement, but as the cost of men's salvation. For all of us the sacrifice was made—"for their sakes" was the one life wholly sanctified—that, when lifted up at last, He might gather all men unto Him. The heights of holiness to which He rose were attained for the sake of others than Himself. They can be neither measured nor explained until seen in the light of God's purpose *to redeem the world*. The Divine Champion: see Him, as foretold by the prophet in the figure of the Conqueror who "cometh from Edom, in dyed garments from Bozrah, moving in the greatness of His strength, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save," "who looked and there was none to help . . . therefore His own arm brought salvation. . . ." See Him again as sung in Newman's hymn:

When all was sin and shame,
A second Adam to the fight
And to the rescue came.

O wisest love! That flesh and blood,
Which did in Adam fail,
Should strive afresh against the foe,
Should strive and should prevail.

And the same theme is echoed in the child-like simplicity of another hymn,

There was no other good enough
To pay the price of sin;
He only could unlock the gate
Of Heaven, and let us in.

Such words are not flights of fancy. They tell, in the language of faith and love and praise, a story enacted in the sight of men, but one which, beyond human power to devise or to achieve, had its beginning and its end in God.

How then is it shared by those for whom it was wrought? The answer to this question lies in an eternal law which requires that every work of God, and every truth revealed by Him, shall become available to man only through the

perceiving mind and the believing heart. I see the answer in the aged Simeon, as he receives in his arms the infant Redeemer, with the words, "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation." I see it in the person of John the Baptist, pointing to the Saviour as He returns radiant from His encounter in the Wilderness: "The Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world." I see it in the congregation at the Lord's Table, kneeling expectantly, to listen and respond to the words in the Prayer of Consecration.

PRAYER

All glory be to thee, Almighty God, for that Thou, of Thy tender mercy, didst give thine only Son, Jesus Christ, to suffer death upon the Cross for our redemption, who made there a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.



Thursday

“OURSELVES ALSO . . .”

READING: Romans 7:14-24

WE LOOK OUT ON A CREATED WORLD THAT IS SUFFERING the tragedy of rebellion against its Maker; on self-will contending with divine love. Then we look back to see God's plan of redemption, first promised, then revealed, at last fulfilled in a supreme act of sacrifice. One may accept the truth of this, may feel the assurance and the hope that it imparts, and yet remain only a spectator, not an actor in the scene. The process of atonement, by which human sin is overcome and forgiveness gained through the propitiation of the sinless for the guilty, is a principle so convincing, whether traced through history or weighed by reason, that it cannot be denied. Still it may remain but a process watched, a principle admitted. How may it be vitally related to ourselves?

The problem of evil, the defeat of God's good purposes by a defiant will, has no solution until brought within the range of personal experience. I hear of a creation groaning in pain, and for a while I am able to dismiss it for the theologian or the natural scientist to ponder; but the moment comes when I am conscious that I am personally, consciously, a part of the phenomenon. The spiritual heritage which I claim as child of God, and to which I would give allegiance, is violated. "The good that I would, I do not; and the evil which I would not, that I do." The struggle of a free will with the forces working to debase it, seen by St. Paul first in a baffled world, then discovered in himself, tells in terms that cannot be denied the story of warfare in the soul of every man. The conflict of frustrated

ideals, of unconquered sin, is transferred from a universal plane to the realm of individual experience. The problem of evil becomes wholly personal. Though "I delight in the law of God, I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and bringing it into captivity. . . . O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

In these straits, struggling against the current of self-will (which I hate, yet cannot control), and reaching for rescue to some power stronger than my own, I find the solution as personal as the problem. Not from myself, but only from Another, can redemption come; from One whose sinlessness both convinces me of my own sin and, by His enduring the conflict beyond my power to endure, lifts me into personal relationship with Him and imparts to me a share in His victory. In that companionship *the law of God*, to which once I looked for moral satisfaction, *is transformed into the love of God*. The pain of conflict is lost in the knowledge of the pain that He has undergone. Through that relationship there is found in Him the righteousness for which, alone I strive in vain.

The thought of "redemption," once conceived of as a transaction which my mind could not accept, and my conscience would not, now glows with new meaning, illuminated by the light that shines from God's human face. Infinite holiness and divine forgiveness, concepts beyond the range of man's intelligence, are known through the incarnate form of a sinless One who shows, through life and death, the power of redeeming love.

So the all-great is the all-loving, too.
So through the thunder comes a human voice
Saying: "O heart I made; a heart beats here.
Face my hands fashioned, see it in myself.
Thou hast no power to conceive of mine;
But love I gave thee with myself to love;
And thou canst love me who have died for thee."

It is this apprehension of moral power imparted from a

source other than one's self, that gives significance to faith. If faith has ever seemed to be a refuge which calls for the surrender of my reason, with comforting assurance that I may put my doubts to rest, it moves now into unsuspected realms and calls for the exercise of untried faculties.

Faith is that penetrating sense which finds new evidence of truth beyond the transitory sights and sounds that easily deceive the eye and confuse the mind. It dispels the unreality of fear and gives substance to inspired hope. It pierces the cloud of human speculation, to discern the purposes and judgments in the mind of God.

By faith I look out upon a world possessed of evil, bent upon destruction, and find His presence who declares, "I came not to destroy but to fulfill," and "Lo! I am with you alway, even to the end. . . ." By faith the rumors of war are superseded by His promise, "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh." By faith I can look into my own soul and find the wreckage of another world—a world of high resolve frustrated, of hope abandoned, and of sin unconquered. Ourselves, also—even we ourselves—groaning within ourselves, waiting . . . waiting . . . till by faith, triumphant faith, the soul cries out, "I thank my God through Jesus Christ."

PRAYER

Son of God, we beseech Thee to hear us.

O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us.

O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, grant us Thy peace.

O God, we have heard with our ears, and our fathers have declared unto us, the noble works that Thou didst in their days, and in the old time before them.

O Lord, arise, help us, and deliver us for Thy Name's sake . . . for Thine honor.



Friday

“WAITING FOR . . . THE REDEMPTION OF THE BODY”

READING: St. Matthew 6:21-33

PUZZLING WORDS! WE RECOGNIZE ST. PAUL'S PICTURE OF A lost world awaiting restoration by the Creator's hand. We know the need felt by ourselves also for the redemption, severally, of our own souls. But our bodies—what of them? Why *that* climax to a spiritual sequence that begins with the interrupted harmonies in the universe about us, and converges upon communion of the human spirit and the Spirit of the Almighty? The Redemption . . . *of the body*? Unless one takes the casual course and passes by on the other side, there are two answers as familiar as they are obvious, and a third more deep and true than either.

One is that the body, the necessary accompaniment of the spirit in a material world, is the symbol of a temporary imprisonment, from which the only redemption finally shall be release. We seem to be confirmed in this interpretation when we look farther into the Apostle's words, “I think it meet, so long as I am in this tabernacle . . .” Many a wayfarer through life echoes the longing for a time when he may put aside this tabernacle and find freedom in a life untrammelled by limitations of the flesh.

Or, taking a more militant attitude, one may frankly recognize and accept the stigma attached to the body by philosophies as old as the human race. The long warfare between material and spiritual, between flesh and soul, has engendered a suspicion of the body as of an inveterate enemy of man. To this idea again St. Paul seems at first to

come in support: "I keep under my body and bring it under subjection, lest I myself (the essential self, the soul) should be a castaway." The physical self-discipline of Lent, suggested by this utterance (in the Epistle for next Sunday), and forever glorified by our Lord's temptation in the wilderness, will be made the theme of meditations for the coming week. Approaching these we may confine ourselves at present to one question; and it brings us to the third answer. What relation has the body to the world's—and therefore to my own—redemption wrought by Christ?

The subject is not incidental. On the contrary, the first step God took, in His plan to reveal and give Himself to man, was to *claim for Himself* the body which He had created. The incarnation, the Word made flesh, the embodiment of God in human form; in such phrases we speak of the destined reunion, forever accomplished in Christ, between the natural and the spiritual. And that union, first seen in the Nativity, was fulfilled when His body was subjected to utmost humiliation and torture, even to death upon the Cross, and reclaimed in the Resurrection. How clearly this purpose in the mind of God unfolds through the slow processes of evolution! The material of His creation is built into lower, then higher, forms of existence; "dust of the ground" is at last shaped according to His likeness, a body into which "He breathed the breath of life, and man became a living soul." Still warfare through long ages must be waged, by the natural body against the spiritual, until the final conquest is won; but it is won, at last, not through subjugation or denial of one by the other. It is a victory of perfect union, first found in Him—then in those whose redeemed bodies are made into temples of the Holy Spirit.

Is the problem of redemption yet solved? No; nor can it be until all this is so woven into Christian thought and speech that every issue of life shall be seen to involve body and spirit inseparably. Why the reference so often heard

to the sins of the flesh, as though they are of a different order from those that mar and hurt the soul? There is no sin of the flesh but has its origin in weakness of will, lust of the heart and selfishness of spirit. One surrenders his heritage, both as man and as child of God, when he seeks exemption from the laws that govern his physical being, and takes refuge in the supposed heights of a disembodied spiritual exaltation. To be risen indeed with Christ and to seek the things which are above, is a quest of body and soul alike—for where He sitteth on the right hand of God, the two are one. In the Sacrament of His redeeming love it is "His body which is given for us." The gift is received into your hands, to "*preserve body and soul into everlasting life.*"

PRAYER

Turn Thou us, O good Lord, and so shall we be turned. Be favorable, O Lord, be favorable to Thy people, who turn to Thee in weeping, fasting, and praying. Thou art a merciful God, full of compassion, long-suffering, and of great pity. Spare Thy people, good Lord; spare them, and let not Thine heritage be brought to confusion. Hear us, O God, for Thy mercy is great, and after the multitude of Thy mercies look upon us; through the merits and mediation of Thy Blessed Son, Jesus Christ Our Lord.

O Almighty God, strengthen and confirm in our hearts the gifts of Thy grace: for the increase of our faith, the strengthening of our hope, the greater clearness of our knowledge, the abounding of our charity, and the preservation of our purity in both body and soul. Through Thy mercy, O our God.



Saturday

“REDEEMING THE TIME”

READING: I Peter 2:19-25

NINETEEN CENTURIES HAVE PASSED SINCE THE SUMMONS TO redeem the time broke upon the ears of the Christian Church. It was written and heard by those who had experienced the redeeming love of God, revealed in the life and death of Jesus Christ. They knew the transformation it had wrought in the aspect of a world once bound by sin and given to despair, now emancipated by a power from above which imparts new spiritual faculties and moral energies. They were conscious of the same release within themselves, also. Secret warfare against enemies of soul and body had been waged before their eyes by One who had prevailed, at the cost of sacrifice endured not for His own sake, but for theirs. To them redemption meant more than a message, even one written in convincing words that convey comfort to the heart. Redemption was rather a fact, accomplished in the terms of the struggle and suffering toil of men and women: accomplished in birth of the Virgin Mary, in humiliation under Pontius Pilate, in death of crucifixion, in triumph, even to that involved in resurrection of the dead. The Apostles' Creed is the utterance of those who know for what it was that their Redeemer died, and who know that their Redeemer lives.

But the story was not yet ended. Redemption, wrought once for all as a divine act on Calvary, is written by God, as it were into a single page of history, in order that it may be findable and found in the experience of every age. What Christ accomplished in His incarnate body becomes an

eternal and living fact that has redemptive activity, through His Body which is the Church. That this is His design appears as He charges His disciples with the message of salvation, and with the means by which His work shall be fulfilled. "Ye are my witnesses."—"Behold I send you forth."—"The works that I do shall ye do also."

What then is our part as Christians, Christ's men, in the divine plan of salvation?

How shall we take to ourselves the Apostle's injunction to redeem the time, in evil days? We read the passage from the beginning, "See then that ye walk circumspectly." We remember our Lord's own words, "How is it that ye cannot discern the signs of the times?" We shall approach the world with open eyes. We shall look beneath the superficial achievements of an age, its boast of progress and of possession, its parade of learning and of petty virtues. We shall look deeply enough to find the anguish of soul which knows, yet will not confess, its sin. Nor, if this insight of ours is as wise as it is keen, shall we be content to lift our voice in futile protest at life's sin-wrought woe. Denunciation cannot work redemption. Rather we shall remember Him who "came not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."

In the spirit of Christ, His followers must be found redeeming the time from injustice, that most sensitive point in all human relations. What was His course who endured injustice in its most severe form? He took His place with the oppressed. Whether in the daily round and common task, paying the price of unremitting toil, or in the presence of false accusation, standing with the multitude of those in every age who suffer wrongfully, or in the hour of His passion, bending beneath the load of human sin—His voice can ever be heard by them that would come after Him: "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me." Then there follow words which unfold the mystery of endurance under

oppression. "My yoke is easy and my burden light." The power of redemptive suffering is love. In Him, endurance of oppression is transformed into redemptive force.

And strife which proceeds from injustice—how shall a world torn by dissension, suffering the ravages of continued war, find deliverance from that? We hear the Gospel of Him who was sent to preach peace to them that are far off and to them that are nigh; but bitterly the question comes from disillusioned hearts: "What can we hope from them who cry 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace?" To many, a declaration of peace now inspires no more confidence than a declaration of war. Let us remember, however, that God's gift of peace to a beleaguered world was not in words, but in truth. It was because the substance of the peace which Christ proclaimed had become incarnate in Himself, that He could bring conviction to His hearers when He said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you." To us who are Christians is committed that same condition in the task of reconciliation. "As He is, so are we in this world." It is not enough, often not befitting, that fair words of peace fall from our lips, while the world awaits at our hands a manifestation, deeper than words, that the Spirit which God has bestowed upon us has brought in us ourselves the gift of inner peace.

Peace in our hearts, our evil thoughts assuaging;
Peace in the Church, where brothers are engaging;
Peace, while the world its busy war is waging.

The redemption of the world from violence and hatred will be found in the "fruit of righteousness, sown in peace of them that make peace"; nowhere else, unless first there.

There can be no complete redemption which does not aim at the seat of sin, where self reigns. When, as our Saviour Christ hath taught us, we pray "deliver us from evil," we may ask in our hearts "deliver us from self." For the essence of all evil is selfishness.

Here, then, we find the key to the inmost meaning of redemption, as our Lord reveals the heights of sinlessness attained through utter selflessness. The world's salvation, from every danger that threatens and from every evil that corrupts mankind, consists in deliverance from the tyranny of self-will. Along the road of that deliverance, the Saviour leads the way. They who watch still cry with wonder, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save." They who follow His path, in His strength, have part in His redeeming work.

PRAYER

Almighty and everlasting God, who, of Thy tender love towards mankind, hast sent Thy Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, to take our flesh upon Him and to suffer death upon the Cross for our redemption, that all mankind should follow the example of His great humility: mercifully grant that we may both follow the example of His patience and also be made partakers of His resurrection; through the same Jesus, Christ our Lord.



FIRST WEEK

REDEEMER OF THE BODY

Monday

THE CENTRALITY OF JESUS CHRIST

READINGS: Philippians 2:5-11; Hebrews 1:1-4

OUR RELIGION IS INESCAPABLY CHRIST-CENTERED. VALID AND sound as is the philosophy of Jesus, discerning and acute as His observations of men and society may be, it is to His life that one turns for guidance, example, and help. Some one has said that Jesus made perfection a new type of experience. Those who know Him best cannot escape the consciousness of His spiritual uniqueness, His divinity. He cannot be comprehended within the human categories. But this assurance alone might make Him seem remote, unapproachable, unattainable. The immediate bond of union with Him is in our humanity, which He shared.

He entered vividly into all human experience; He accepted the limitations of our common nature; He was hungry and thirsty and weary in body. He shared so fully the heartbreaking loss of the dear brother of Mary and Martha that He wept with them at the grave of Lazarus. Often, though conscious of the need of His ministry of healing,

even though some had come long journeys to feel the touch of His redeeming and restoring hand, He yet felt constrained to withdraw into a quiet place for rest and refreshment. His sense of dependence upon the Heavenly Father lured Him to some near-by hillside, where He could spend adequate times in prayer. Normally self-restrained and utterly serene, He had moments when impiety and cruelty moved Him to indignation. It was at such a time that He thrust the money-changers from the Temple. At the end of His ministry, gazing out over the unrepentant city, overcome by His emotions He broke into loud lamentation. His cruel death upon the Cross introduced Him to physical suffering from which His human body instinctively recoiled.

It was His very sensitiveness of human nature that enabled Him to reveal, as did no other, mankind's propensities for evil and possibilities for good. It is inconceivable that Jesus did not feel the drives and urges which can lead men to the finest victories or to the bitterest defeats.

In our study of Jesus the Redeemer, we may well begin with the Jesus of history. A number of years ago Adolph Harnack said, "There is no other fact in all history which mankind needs so much to have brought home as this: 'A man by the name of Jesus Christ once stood in our midst.'"

We want to discover the secret of that amazing life whereby He was able so to bring His body into subjection to higher things, that men came to see in Him a revelation of the Eternal God. We need to learn from Him how to integrate all our powers and capacities toward the sublime ends of life. We think of what He said and did and was. There is a timelessness about His Gospel. He is universal Man. Without a home, He creates the ideal of the Christian family. Humanly of a narrow and often bigoted race, the sweep of His love transcends all racial prejudice. "East is

East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet"? They meet in Jesus Christ. They said of Him, "Whence knoweth this man letters, never having learned?" and yet He is the world's supreme teacher. Although psychology was not dreamed of as a science in His day, still He is the supreme mental diagnostician, able to touch vitally the springs of motive. He bridged the chasm between precept and practice. His doctrine is His life and His life is His doctrine. Though He lived in an obscure province of Syria and never traveled a hundred miles from His home until His fate was sealed, the ethic which He taught and lived is quite as compelling today as it was two thousand years ago. He was perfectly man, as well as truly God. His example has opened the way to man's realization of his finest destiny.

One thing we must never forget: that life of His was lived. It is this historic Jesus Christ who is man's hope of redemption.

Our conscious selves are able to recognize values and, with adequate guidance and example, even to apprehend ultimate values. We can also examine and test our lives in the light of these values. Thus are established standards according to which self approval or disapproval is gauged. Failure to achieve them brings a sense of guilt and discontent. He is a revelation of those values. Following in His steps brings assurance and peace—the peace that passeth understanding. By the inspiration of His spirit, natural drives and urges can be redirected from their first objectives to higher goals. It is the Lord Christ who has adequately discovered these nobler ends, and gives us the technique by which imprisoned splendors are released and man's impulses turned toward holiness and God. The sincere seeker for righteousness believes, increasingly, that the voice of Jesus is the voice of the Infinite; comes to the conviction that God must be like Jesus, and to assurance that He who

once walked the paths of Galilee still lives, still beckons a reluctant race toward the Kingdom of God. George Herbert Palmer, the philosopher, has truly said, "When I ask myself where I shall find my deepest insight into the being of God and learn how He can best be connected with my life, I have no doubt where it can be had—in Jesus of Nazareth."

PRAYER

To think of Thee, O Christ, is to rest; to know Thee is eternal life; to see Thee is the end of all we desire; and to serve Thee is perfect freedom and everlasting joy. Therefore we come to Thee.

Almighty and most merciful Father, who hast given us a new commandment that we should love one another, give us also grace that we may fulfill it. Make us gentle, courteous, and forbearing. Direct our lives so that we may look each to the good of the other in word and deed. And hallow all our friendships by the blessing of Thy spirit; for His sake who loved us and gave Himself for us, Jesus, Christ our Lord.

—*Prayers For the Christian Year*



Tuesday

THE BACKGROUND

READING: St. Matthew 4:1-4; S. James 1:12-20

STUDENTS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT ARE CONSCIOUS OF THE wisdom of the Evangelists in selecting the incidents which they record. It is one of the indexes of the inspiration of the Gospels. Particularly is this true in the biography of our Lord. The major experiences of life, those that constitute crises in the existence of a normal individual, are there revealed, implicitly, if not explicitly. In Him life is observed under the aspect of Eternity. We should confidently expect, therefore, to find some event in the life of the Master which provides at least a background for our thought of the Redemption of the Body. The Temptation in the Wilderness is the answer to our search.

There the Master is exposed to the cumulative urge of hunger and, probably, of thirst. The story of the Temptation is, of course, told in a highly symbolic form. The elements of Jesus' inner struggle are projected like figures in a drama. The voice that whispers to His soul becomes personalized in the vividness of dramatic experience. Temptation becomes the Tempter. For days, absorbed in intensity of prayer and meditation, the Master apparently is unconscious of the need for food. Toward the close of His appointed vigil He suddenly becomes hungry. "If thou be the Son of God," so runs the insidious suggestion, "command that these stones be made bread."

The challenge follows closely upon His baptism in the River Jordan, where there came to Him a profound sense

of awareness of His divine Sonship. Despite the sneer which the first phrase obviously carries, the demand seems, at first glance, apparently legitimate: "Gratify your appetite, and thus prove your Sonship!" Unless this unique relationship, so consciously felt in solemn experience, can meet the elemental urges of His life, what assurance can He have that He is the Son of God? It is a temptation to use power for carnal ends; to sacrifice obedience for personal comfort, either by anticipating the close of a dedicated period of abstinence or by claiming for His personal relief abilities conferred upon Him for His ministry to mankind. We might paraphrase it in modern language thus: "Abandon your altruistic and idealistic dreams; feed yourself!" Everyone can feel his affinity with Jesus here, for all of us face the same test, all feel the smiling invitation to surrender high aims and lofty purposes to attain life's baser satisfactions. Jesus' reply is cast in the language of the Holy Scriptures. That ancient literature was ever the armory from which, at point of need, He selected the proper weapons to defend Himself against assaults upon the soul. "Man doth not live by bread alone."

To be truly man, one must have something more than the support of bodily needs and appetites, for man is a citizen of two worlds. On the physical side he is an animal whose tissues are constantly undergoing a process of disintegration. The very continuance of his life depends upon food to repair this waste. But parallel to the life of the body, or enmeshed with it, is the life of the spirit. This life also needs food and exercise for its development. Those who try to live within the bounds of the lower appetites know that deep within there is something which hungers for the best. To work, to study, to play, to worship, to share: man lives for these as well. The universal experience of the race witnesses to a profound longing after the good, after God. St. Augustine truly said, "Thou hast made us for thyself,

O Lord, and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee." At the very threshold of His ministry, Jesus determined that, if the higher purposes of God could be best subserved by His abstinence, the time of the appointed fast should not be broken.

The only safe life is the disciplined life. But His is no invitation to a *meaningless* asceticism. He labored as a carpenter to help support a family. He knew struggle and penury; He built parables about the baking of bread, the staff of life. John the Baptist came neither eating nor drinking, but the Son of Man was a guest at the wedding feast. He accepted the hospitality of Pharisees and Publicans. He compared the Eternal Kingdom to a great supper. He entered into the simple joys of social life. Throughout His teaching there is constant reference to festivities, music, and dancing. Yet He ever conceived of man's destiny in greater terms than these, terms of the life of the spirit. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness," He was wont to say. "Man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which He possesseth." "Man does not live by bread alone." If the cup of his physical appetites is filled to the brim, he is restless, unsatisfied, discomfited, painfully aware of a higher destiny. The redemption of the body is inextricably linked with the supremacy of the soul, with the safeguarding of the higher life that, because he is made in the image of God, is implicit in every man.

PRAYER

O Lord, Shield of our help, Who wilt not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able: help us, we entreat Thee, in all our straits and wrestlings, to lift up our eyes unto Thee and stay our hearts on Thee, through Jesus Christ.

—Christina Rossetti

Grant us, O Lord, to pass this day in gladness and peace,

without stumbling and without stain; that, reaching the eventide victorious over all temptation, we may praise Thee, the eternal God, who art blessed and dost govern all things, world without end.

—*Mozarabic Prayer-Book*



Wednesday

THE SPLENDOR OF THE BODY

READING: Romans 8:11-14; Hebrews 2:6-10

SOME YEARS AGO, WITH CHARACTERISTIC INSIGHT, BISHOP Brent wrote, "Without a conviction of the splendor of the human body, belief in the splendor of the human soul, of which the body is the living dress, is likely to fade away in the golden mist of unoperative sentiment." From the days of the ancients, notably the Greeks, the human body has been regarded as the artistic ideal. Nothing in nature or in man's imagination has yet been conceived that surpasses manhood or womanhood in strength and beauty. Nor does it require a wide stretch of the imagination to see the face of God in the face of a little child. In every cycle—childhood, youth, maturity, and old age—there is a distinctive beauty and fascination that the body possesses. The human body is the supreme miracle of creation. Admire as we may the products of our own inventive genius, the intricate machinery which the mind of man has fashioned in these later days of scientific advance, the most amazing mechanism which we can well imagine is the human body.

Dr. Alexis Carrel, in his recent book, *Man the Unknown*, has offered to the uninitiated a bewildering picture of the mystery, the intricacy, and the efficacy of our physiological activities. The body is the channel, the medium, of our communication with and use of the eternal world. In a sense, it is more than the fabric in which the soul is arrayed. It is literally the Temple of the Holy Ghost. Therefore, the

splendor of the human body should be an incitement to reverence, that it may be dedicated to its highest uses.

To paraphrase the argument of Bishop Brent: the sensualist defames this holy shrine by subjecting to abuse functions which may be elevated to the level of a sacrament. "There is not a desire, an emotion, a passion, planted by God in man that has not its legitimate satisfaction." It is one of the supreme tragedies of these days that in much of our literature the word "love," properly so holy and so austere that it is synonymous with the nature of God, has been debased to the level of lust. We have almost reached a point where one is constrained to emulate the example of St. Paul and try to find a new word for love, sufficiently clean and holy to describe the character of God. Nature ever punishes desecration. When the body is used only to serve passion, there is drained from it even the capacity for sensual enjoyment.

The *pagan* ascetic often treats the body as an enemy. The motive of a right self-discipline is not contempt for the body, but reverence. The Scripture reference to the "flesh" is to man's evil tendencies, just as its use of the metaphorical phrase of the "heart" is synonymous with our deeper affections. The tendency of mankind is to swing to extremes. The ascetic ideal has given place to a sense-worship which harks back to pre-Christian days. The consciousness today is drenched with reports of things within the physical order. We do not think; we only feel. A doctrine of release has been preached under the euphemism of "self-expression," the release of one's repressed desires. But true self-expression is the last stage, and not the first, of man's development. He must express that which identifies him with God and the higher values, rather than that which identifies him with the brute.

When one thinks of it, the problem of good is as compelling as the problem of evil. Why should men follow the

course that is difficult, unselfish, and heroic, against the mob pressure that lures them to the low levels of self-seeking and meanness? It has always been harder to swim against the stream than to float with it. Some biological urges will always have to be repressed if we are to live in peace. It is a witness to the splendor of man that he has achieved such a thing as "the law of the sea," whereby sailors risk their lives for those in danger, whosoever they may be. It is to the eternal glory of the race that scientists and others, seekers for the truth, have been willing to lay down their lives for the service of it. They not only repress legitimate desires; they surrender the central possession of life itself, modestly, willingly, heroically. True self-expression means the release of one's best impulses and noblest consecrations.

To achieve a unity between the body and the soul, to make them both the servants of life's highest intimations, is to fulfill one's destiny as a child of God. Reverence for the human body dedicates it to use as a Temple where the spirit of God may dwell, directing our purposes, mastering our lives, and filling us with the Power that makes for righteousness.

PRAYER

O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Man, who hast glorified our human nature which Thou hast assumed by placing it on Thy throne at God's right hand; we pray Thee so to purify us from all sin that we may be enabled thither to ascend, where Thou reignest with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end.

—*Preces Domesticæ*

Lord, take my lips, and speak through them; take my mind, and think through it; take my heart, and set it on fire.

—*William Aitken*



Thursday

THE DIGNITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL

READING: St. Luke 12:4-7; Isaiah 32:2-5

AGAINST THIS ANCIENT AND COMPELLING WITNESS TO THE DIGNITY of man, contemporary irreligion has released a persistent and vociferous protest. Many of our popular modern writers have expressed a positive contempt for human nature. They have described man as "a silly fly on a dizzy wheel"; "a parasite infesting the epidermis of a midge among the planets." One man offers this personal testimony: "The cosmos is chaos; the chaos is I; and I am my interstitial glands." Impressed with the vastness of the interstellar universe and man's apparent insignificance, another of them declares, "Astronomically speaking, man is infinitesimal." To which Dr. Coe replies with compelling logic, "Astronomically speaking, man is the astronomer." The universe is only as vast as the mind can conceive it. All that we know about things great and small, all that science has revealed to us, is within the apprehension of the human mind. One's attitude toward human nature is largely the reflex of his cosmic philosophy. It makes a vast difference in one's conception of his own destiny whether he believes that the universe is a blind mechanism crashing on its ruthless way, or that a loving Father has fashioned the earth as a garden in which His children may live and be happy, where He is present in the Spring, luring them to the uplands of the life abundant.

When the radical psychologist suggests that religion is "a form of make-believe woven by pious hands," or that

faith is a matter of wishful thinking, it is quite proper, as Dr. Fosdick has pointed out, to subject him to the charge that his denial of the existence of God is a projection of his own sense of frustration and futility. "By their fruits ye shall know them." One's cosmic philosophy in large measure determines his morale. The Christian hypothesis eventuates in a sense of *noblesse oblige*, an awareness of the dignity and grandeur of the human body and of man's high destiny. The hypothesis of irreligion leaves one stranded on the flats of pessimism and despair. "Ours is a lost cause and there is no place for us in the natural universe," writes one; "Life is a comedy, or high tragedy, or plain farce," writes another. "Brief and powerless is man's life; on him and all his race the slow, sure doom falls, pitiless and dark," writes another. "At best, whatever man does is something that can only prolong the struggles and worries and for the most part futile dreams of those with whom he finds himself companied here in this atomic or cellular welter. In short, I catch no meaning from all I have seen, and pass, quite as I came, confused and dismayed." As you see, one's cosmic philosophy in large measure also determines one's morale.

The solemn emphasis of the Bible stresses the dignity of man. The Psalmist, as he contemplated the heavens, frankly acknowledged man's insignificance in terms of magnitude. But yet he realized that God had made man "little less than the angels, to crown him with glory and honor."

Jesus Christ is ever the champion of personality. His entire ethic emphasizes the dignity of the individual. It is natural in the present age to think in terms of mechanisms, and to conceive of the individual as a cog in a vast machine. The Master deeply impressed upon His hearers God's respect and consideration for each and every man. His own ministry was largely involved in seeking and saving the lost, one by one. None can escape the social im-

plications of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the catholic sweep of His sympathies; but His first stress is upon the essential worth and dignity of the individual, in the sight of God.

The exquisite fifteenth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel, often called "the Gospel in the Gospels," tells of the solicitude of a shepherd for one lost sheep, and of a father for one lost boy. No one is insignificant in the sight of God. By a strange perversity of interpretation, the lost were, in the old theology, identified with the damned, but an intelligent reading of the Gospel indicates that the lost are objects of God's peculiar solicitude. The shepherd leaves the ninety and nine in the wilderness and goes after the one until he finds it; the woman sweeps the house diligently for the one lost coin; and the father throws his loving arms around the wayward boy whose return to his home he describes as a resurrection.

As one passes from the Parables to the record of Our Lord's life of active service, he observes that Jesus still further emphasizes this lesson of the importance of the individual. He defies social convention in an interview with the woman of Samaria by Jacob's well. He yields to the importunities of the Syro-Phœnician woman who had no claims upon a ministry confined, as it normally was, to the "lost sheep of the House of Israel." The Gospels are filled with stories of personal interviews and personal ministries. God's love and God's care for every one of His children is the burden of the message of the Master. "The very hairs of your head are numbered," He said. "Consider the lilies, how they grow, the fowls of the air and the grass of the field." If God concerns Himself with the needs of plant life and of soaring birds, of how much greater concern are you, made in His image. In a day when social theories tend to merge the individual into the mass, and to rob him of his freedom as a child of God, the Lord Christ still calls us to

the glorious liberty of the sons of the Heavenly Father and to self-respect, a natural response to the dignity and utter worth of so high a calling.

PRAYER

O God, who by the discipline of Nature hast prepared the spirit of man to be Thy dwelling, and hast shown us in Thy Son the eternal Will by which all things are made; help us to reverence Thy laws and to look for the glory that shall be revealed in us; through Jesus, Christ our Lord.

—*Westminster Prayers*

O God, who hast made man in Thine own image and hast never left Thyself without witness; grant that, as Thou didst send Thy Spirit into the hearts of holy men of old, to reveal the glory that should follow them, so we also may believe on Him whom we see not, and look for the fulfilment of His purpose with joy unspeakable and full of glory; through the same Thy Son Jesus, Christ our Lord.

—*Westminster Prayers*



Friday

THE INCARNATION

READING: St. John 1:1-17

THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH AND DWELT AMONG US. THE Incarnation is the watershed of human history. It marks the zenith of a long evolutionary struggle which culminated in the Creator identifying Himself with human nature. Nothing else could so confer dignity and impress nobility upon the human body. But it is not only the bare fact of the Incarnation which gives luster and glory to our common humanity: it is the life that Jesus lived here on earth; it is the use He made of this medium of expression and service. Through it He revealed God to man in terms which even a little child can understand. And He revealed man to himself.

We can surmise, at least, how near the divine our humanity can be lifted if we possess the mind and the spirit of the Lord Jesus. The most compelling influences in our lives are incarnations. Truth, beauty and goodness, as abstractions, have little significance for us. Life comes from life as fire from fire, "As one candle lighteth another, nor groweth the less, so nobleness enkindleth nobleness." The Incarnation is God's supreme demonstration of the inherent capacities of humanity, when united to God, to reach nobility of character. Human life is infiltrated by the Spirit and sustained by the example of Him whom we call Master and Lord.

Like Him "who went about doing good," we too, with His aid, can dedicate ourselves to deeds of compassion and

helpful service. Our hands can be held out in blessing and healing. Our feet can go on errands of mercy. Our lips can speak the words that will exorcise evil spirits and restore to health and a sound mind those who are emotionally unbalanced. By a law of spiritual contagion we can draw others into the Kingdom which He came to establish. With a proper regard for the grandeur of the human body and the dignity of the human soul we can be witnesses, giving personal testimony and convincing demonstration of what transpires when Christ dwells in us. The ultimate apologetic is a converted and redeemed humanity.

The cry of the Greeks, which the Acts records, rings down through the years: "Sirs, we would see Jesus!" That challenges all who call themselves by the name of Christ. Christianity is not primarily a philosophy, nor the religion of a Book; it is, rather, a surrender to a supreme and vibrant Personality. Really to accept Christ as divine means that He reigns as King in our lives and that we render to Him a happy and continuing obedience. Belief in His Resurrection means, according to the testimony of St. Paul, the being lifted in our lives to higher levels, so that life has a qualitative rather than a quantitative significance. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above."

Even a few, if wholly converted in body, mind, and spirit, can change the moral climate of an age. Redemption awaits the day when men and women will accept their lives as a trust from Heaven, reverence their bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit, dedicate their endowments and capacities to the service of God and their fellow men, and maintain an ever vivid communion with the Eternal Father. Such lives become an extension of the Incarnation. Christ dwells in them; Christ speaks and acts through them; and as they work with Him, a reluctant race is lured into the Kingdom of God.

Although St. Paul had little sympathy with the brutality of the Isthmian games, he saw in the athletic life of the ancient Greeks lessons which the Christian might well lay to heart. Success in what we call sport is largely dependent upon self-discipline and practice. "So fight I, not as one that beateth the air," says the Apostle. "So run that ye may obtain." "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood."

All must adopt a life of severe self-restraint in the use of meats and drinks, in the matter of adequate sleep, in a single-minded devotion to the task in hand. Daily exercise and a training that sometimes irks the soul constitute the primary prerequisite for victory. But physical training is not all. Health is a harmony. Morale is quite as essential. Nor is it possible to divide the physical and spiritual into water-tight compartments. Our interior life is photographed upon our faces. Health is not achieved without a definite technique.

In our spiritual warfare the same persistent regimen is demanded. The universe is law-abiding, spiritually as well as physically. The good life can only be achieved by daily acts of self-denial, daily deeds of kindness, daily struggles to be pure and brave, daily study of God's word, daily quiet times with the Heavenly Father, frequent participation in the Sacrament of the Altar. These build a road to strength and life's durable satisfactions. As one cannot expect a strong and splendid body without strict obedience to scientific laws which govern health, so he cannot hope for spiritual serenity unless he submit himself to those habits, customs, and attitudes which are envisaged in the life of the Son of Man.

For a long while the Church has been conceived of as a moral ambulance, picking up wounded who lay by the roadside of life, ministering to those who were the victims of cruel circumstance or their own folly and sin. In this day of quarantines, serums, vaccines, and antitoxins, we have

been taught to think of medicine as preventive as well as remedial. So also is religion. "Unto Him who is able to keep you from falling" is St. Paul's commendation and ascription.

Unstained by passion, unchilled by cynicism, Christian manhood can achieve a release of "the imprisoned splendor." The body finds its fullest meaning and its richest possibilities only when the soul has discovered itself and claimed its truest liberty. Prayer is a means whereby power is released which frees man from fear and integrates his personality around high central loyalties and ideals. It is in worship that the real self has its fullest expression and its noblest dedications. Worship offers a challenge to inner inspection. Worship educates the affections. We cannot too often be subjected to the "rectifying influence of the sanctuary." Jesus Christ must be served with all the romance of our being, but supremely He is to be adored. In the rapt silence of such adoration, God speaks, strength comes, religion is vital.

In every other area of life, in sport, in study, in business, in the achievement of health, we have devoted ourselves to approved techniques. As it is folly to hope to drift to knowledge, so one cannot flutter after holiness. The lives of the saints were dominated *by a rule*, by that sort of exercise which tempers the sword of the Spirit. Only with such regular and persistent training are responses to the leading of the Spirit automatic. The best things in life are not to be had for the asking. They require unremitting effort. But what begins as labor, ends as joy.

PRAYER

As we celebrate the coming of the Word in human form to dwell among us, so help us, O Father, to follow His example, in whom the fullness of God dwells bodily, Jesus, Christ our Lord.

—*Westminster Prayers*

O God, who hast set before us the great hope that Thy Kingdom shall be established on earth, so rule our lives by Thy Spirit that all our thoughts, desires, and acts being made obedient unto Thee, Thy power, Thy glory, and the mightiness of Thy Kingdom may be known in the counsel of men: for Jesus Christ's sake.

—*Westminster Prayers*



Saturday

THE BODY AND THE LIFE ETERNAL

READING: II Corinthians 6:4-10; St. Luke 14:27-33

HOW CAN THE SPLENDOR OF THE HUMAN BODY BE ENVISAGED in the light of its speedy dissolution? Is not permanence a clear mark of perfection? Unhappily we are limited, when we think that, by our materialistic preconceptions. We trust only that which is perceptible to the senses. The writers of the New Testament had a better mind. To them the assurance of eternal life is not primarily something to be attained in the future, but rather an acquisition to be achieved in the present. Immortality is not a matter of length of days, but of aliveness and moral awakening; not, as Dr. Peabody has said, "a matter of speculation, or even of anticipation, but rather of appropriation." "This is life eternal; that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent."

Appearances are deceitful. One may think himself robustly alive and yet be stricken with a fatal disease. The father, in the Parable of the Lost Boy, understood: "My son was dead and is alive again." Some have attained a type of life that partakes of the timelessness of God. Harnack said of the Master, "His religion is nothing else than eternal life lived in time, in the spirit of love and by the grace of God." It was, and is, impossible to believe that a vibrant personality like Jesus could have been snuffed out like a guttering candle. What kind of a moral universe would it be if that life ended on the Cross?

One recalls the fierce, passionate words of Tennyson, shaken to the very depths of his being by the loss of one whom he loved better than life itself: "If there be a God that has made the earth and put this hope and passion into us, it must foreshadow the truth. If it be not true, then no God, but a mocking fiend, created us; and I'd shake my fist in his almighty face and tell him that I cursed him. I'd sink my head tonight in a chloroformed handkerchief and have done with it all."

There is a life of the body which is not involved in the vicissitudes of the body. So Emerson declared: "What is excellent, as God lives, is permanent." Moreover, the desire of man to continue at his creative tasks postulates wider fields of usefulness. To be able to possess eternal life under the limitations of our present humanity, what could bestow upon the human body a higher tribute or greater nobility? To live in heaven, here and now, and to be able to create the atmosphere of heaven around about us—despite the frailty of our natures and the weakness of our wills, that is life eternal.

It is open to question whether that little band of Christians whom Jesus left to propagate the Faith could possibly have been successful had they not thrown in the face of a decadent civilization the challenge of personal purity—had they not borne in their bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus. Not only in the Stigmata was their source of power, although from martyrdom they were not spared, but rather in those characteristics which the world calls Beatitudes, the keystone of whose arch must ever be "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Our vision of the Eternal is too often fogged by our worldliness. Atrophy of the soul accompanies abuse of the body. Spiritual visibility is always in proportion to the sincerity of our motives and the purity of our living. Light

comes as we live up to that which has been bestowed. The "still small voice" is heard by those of deepest sensitivity and awareness.

That is, of course, a counsel of perfection. The confessions of the holiest have always been the most heartbreaking. Even St. Paul felt that he had not attained to the Resurrection. He was only pressing on. God is merciful. Through His Son He offered to mankind His mercy and the assurance of forgiveness. But there must be no halfway surrender, no accommodation to the low standards of contemporary life, no use of the body as toy of the passions. The oblation which we offer is explicit in the service of the Holy Communion: "We here present our souls and bodies to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice." Could we but realize that we are offering to God our bodies, the very dress and fabric of our souls, we should then strive to present them in purity and health, dedicated to Him who walked among the lilies. We should then disdain a truce with the powers of evil or with enveloping despair. Nor should we yield to the fear which grips men's hearts to-day. With deep assurance and profound sincerity, we should fall on our knees and cry, with joyous lips, "My Lord and my God!"

PRAYER

Thou holy Spirit of God, who dost prefer before all temples the upright heart and pure, instruct us in all truth: what is dark in us, illumine; what is low, raise and support; what is shallow, deepen; that every chapter of our lives may witness to Thy power and justify the ways of God to men.

—*John Milton*

Grant to us, O Lord, to know that which is worth knowing, to love that which is worth loving, to praise that which

pleaseth Thee best, to prize that which is precious to Thee, and to hate all that is evil in Thine eyes; and grant us true judgment, and above all that we search out and do what is well pleasing unto Thee, through Jesus, Christ our Lord.

—*Thomas à Kempis*



SECOND WEEK

REDEEMER OF THE SOUL

Monday

THE SOUL

In your patience ye shall win your souls.—St. Luke 21:19.

THE REDEMPTION OF THE SOUL IS WHAT WE ARE NOW TO consider; and, if we are to think clearly about it, we must first decide what we mean by "soul." *Am* I a soul or *have* I a soul? Is the soul a thing or a process, something ready made or in the making? All these questions start deep philosophical inquiries, on which the minds of great and learned men have debated for centuries without coming to any agreement; and so what is the ordinary person to do? Since this book is practical and devotional in character, rather than theoretical and theological, we shall endeavor to avoid technical discussion and go for an answer to the teaching of our Lord and to our own experience.

In the Bible the word translated "soul" usually signifies "wind" or "breath" or "spirit"; but that does not mean that it is unsubstantial or unreal. In fact, a strong argument might be made for the proposition that the spiritual is the *only* real. All the material things about us—even the so

solid mountains—are actually crumbling away before our eyes, and some day will cease to be. Spirit alone endures. As St. Paul informs us: “The things that are not, bring to naught the things that are.” Spirit—God’s and man’s—is ever-creating, changing, developing the world of things about us; and it will outlast all material things.

But how do I know that I have a soul? And, if so, what is it? The Bible tells us that God breathed into man the breath of life, and “man became a living soul.” Thus, the soul is something divine in its nature, given us by God. The soul is that part of our nature that makes you you, and me me. It is the self or *ego*, the core of personality, that which differentiates you or me from all else, that which enables each of us to say, “I.” It cannot be defined, but only experienced. Man is essentially a soul, temporarily inhabiting a body of flesh which some day will give place to a finer and better instrument. “What shall we do with you when you are dead?” Socrates’ friends asked him; to which he replied, “You can do anything you like, if you can catch me.” The soul, therefore, is the self; and instead of saying, “I have a soul,” it is more accurate to say, “I am a soul.”

We must beware, however, of thinking of the soul as a completed but inert entity, like a beautiful vase or picture. Instead it is living and growing, more a process than a thing, constantly becoming. At birth it exists only in germ, in potentiality. The new-born baby seems less a self or personality than a bundle of instincts and emotions. He looks at the world as all of a piece and has only a rudimentary consciousness of himself as over against it. He clutches at the moon as readily as at his blanket. Gradually he experiences things as pleasant or unpleasant, and acts accordingly. Frustration, difficulty, disappointment, arouse him still further; but he can scarcely be said to be a fully conscious self. There is as yet too little of that coördination of emotions and instincts which is implied in a self. In other words,

selfhood is not a gift or endowment given us complete at birth. We begin life with only the raw materials out of which the self is to be fashioned; and the fashioning thereof is the task of both time and eternity. Persons do not start off as persons so much as with possibility of becoming persons. Indeed, a complete and unified personality does not always emerge. Many older people know what it is to have a divided or distracted personality. There is something that strikes home to us all in the following lines:

Within my earthly temple there's a crowd:
There's one of us that's humble, one that's proud,
There's one that's broken-hearted for his sins,
There's one that unrepentant sits and grins,
There's one that loves his neighbor as himself,
There's one that cares for naught save fame and pelf;
From what corroding care would I be free,
If once I could determine which is me!

If such a description applies to us, it means that we are still immature; that we have not yet grown up, have not yet developed a true self or character. By selecting the thing he wants to be and sticking to it through thick and thin, in spite of setbacks, discouragements, and difficulties, the really maturing person attains a unity, builds a character; and so his soul is saved.

This is what our Lord meant in the words of our text. In the Authorized Version of the Bible it reads: "In your *patience possess* ye your souls"; but that translation misses the true meaning. The word "possess" can better be translated "enter into possession," or "win." The word for "patience" means "putting up with things" or "putting things through." The whole sentence really means: "By your persevering endurance you shall win or enter into possession of your souls or selves." Thus the self is not a thing, fixed or static, nor does it grow of itself as do plants and vegetables. It begins as a bundle of God-given potentialities, which, by proper reactions to life's experiences, may become

coherent and definite, until of some mature person we can say positively, "He is a personality"; "He has character."

Our main task in life, the reason why we are put here, is to achieve personality, to develop into selves. Keats describes this world as "a vale of soul-making." It is God's garden, where He has sown the seed of immortal souls; and He looks for, awaits, and also helps, their development into His own likeness. Every experience of life—and particularly the hard ones—can be so used as to develop our selves or win our souls. God help us to do it!

PRAYER

O Almighty God, who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men, grant unto thy people that they may love the thing which thou commandest, and desire that which thou dost promise; that so, among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found; through Jesus, Christ our Lord.



Tuesday

SIN

Sin that dwelleth in me.—Romans 7:20.

OUR TASK IN LIFE IS, THEN, TO WIN OR SAVE OUR SOULS. As compared with that, nothing else really matters. The world passes away, and to gain that which we are sure to lose at the expense of losing eternal life is a poor bargain.

If from birth you and I had always reacted properly to our environment, we should be as God meant us to be—perfect. No one has ever done that except Jesus the Christ, of whom we read: “He increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.” In those words is described the perfect development or unfolding of a life, as the flower from the seed, into a complete humanity, upon which the Father looked and was satisfied. Jesus is the true exhibit of life, the normal man as God intended him to be. The rest of us are abnormal, subnormal. We have all “fallen short of the glory of God.” The reason for our failure lies in that short but ugly word “Sin.”

Sin is a word we do not like, nor is it used today as much as formerly. Indeed, one of the most outstanding characteristics of contemporary religion is loss of a sense of sin. Preachers seldom preach about it; and people come to their pastors for advice on every subject under heaven except how to save their souls from it. Religion is commended for many reasons: economic, æsthetic, moral, practical; but rarely today is the emphasis where St. Paul put it, on the forgiveness of sins. The popular practice is to explain sin away by calling it “good in the making” or a “suppressed

complex." Or it is spoken of simply as a case of misunderstanding or maladjustment. It is a survival of the animal in man, we are told; something he will outgrow. It may be true, as a great scientist has lately told us, that "modern man is not worrying about his sins"; and, if so, that perhaps explains a great many of the things that are happening in the world today, and in our own unspiritual lives.

For sin is a terrible reality, disguise it as we will. It is as real as heat, or electricity, or life itself. Deny it, and it still confronts you. Throw it out of the door, and it comes in by the window. Explain it away, and it remains to demand solution. Leave it out of your theory of life, and its horrid presence mocks your theory. Sin is no illusion. To be sure of this, we have only to glance at our morning papers, with their appalling record of evil and crime. We have only to look about us to see the selfishness, lust, bitterness, pride and hate in our fellows. In fact, we need only look within, to realize the sinfulness of our own hearts. Our consciences testify against us. Our self-blame, not only for our own misdeeds, but for opportunities lost and dreams unfulfilled, is evidence of the reality of sin.

But while sin is a reality, it is not a thing. We talk usually of sin as if it possessed a concretely objective existence, as if there were a mass of something outside of us against which we have to fight. But there is no such entity. Sin has no separate existence, independent of ourselves. It is not a thing, but a condition or attitude of the will. Because we are free, we are capable of sinning. We must learn to distinguish between sin and sins, between the disease and its symptoms, between the perverted will and its acts, between the root and its fruit. The fruit of sin is wickedness: sickening scandal, murder, theft, adultery, drunkenness and such like things. Of these human law takes cognizance. Not so God, who is chiefly concerned with the root or source of wickedness. "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but

God looketh on the heart." "Whoso hateth his brother is a murderer." "Whoso looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

That is our Lord's standard; and it shows us the real nature of sin *in God's eyes*. Sin is a very part of me. It is not something outside of me, as it were some evil thing clinging to my soul. Rather it is the soul itself in an attitude of defiance toward God. I am personally involved in it, thoroughly to be identified with it. It is woven into the very warp of my being. It is, indeed, myself turning away from God. And as long as I am willingly in this attitude (or condition) of alienation from God, nothing in heaven or earth, not even God Himself, can save me.

There is, however, no need for despair, but rather for thankfulness, in that sin is so closely identified with me, because it means that it may still be a something within my own control. To be sure, the evil deeds I have committed, and the bad influence I have exerted, are beyond my power to undo. No amount of remorse can undo them. But the cause of all these evils, the sinful heart and will, I can do something about. If the essence of sin is turning away from God, then, in the very nature of the case, its cure consists in turning back; and that is what we call Repentance. Repentance is essential. Remorse may be associated with repentance, but it is not of its essence. The Greek word most commonly used means literally "to change your mind"—to get a new sense of values and, as a result, "to set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." As a sinner, you are one going in the wrong direction; therefore you must "right about face." Sorrow may cause you to turn, or it may simply be your enlightened common sense that turns you. Quite as often sorrow *follows* repentance, and sometimes for long afterwards. Repentance is essentially an act of will; whether emotion is present or not is of quite secondary importance. Certainly emotion alone, being "sorry

for one's sins," is not enough. Doing, not feeling, is the important thing. "He that *doeth* righteousness is righteous."

All through the Bible, in the Old Testament as well as the New, the emphasis is laid upon action. Sorrow for sin, if it exists, must be followed by determined resolution to sin no more. "Turn ye even to me with all your heart." "Rend your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God." "Cease to do evil; learn to do good." "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God."

PRAYER

Turn Thou us, O good Lord, and so shall we be turned. Be favorable, O Lord, be favorable to Thy people, who turn to Thee in weeping, fasting, and praying. For Thou art a merciful God, full of compassion, long-suffering, and of great pity. Thou sparest when we deserve punishment, and in Thy wrath thinkest upon mercy. Spare Thy people, good Lord, spare them, and let not Thine heritage be brought to confusion. Hear us, O Lord, for Thy mercy is great, and after the multitude of Thy mercies look upon us; through the merits and mediation of Thy blessed Son Jesus, Christ our Lord.



Wednesday

THE CROSS

God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.

—II Corinthians 5:19

SIN IS NOT ONLY INDIVIDUAL BUT SOCIAL, IN THAT IT EXISTS in all the sons of man; not just a personal defect, but also cosmic. We are actually born in sin, in that we are members of a sinful race. Something very serious has gone wrong with God's plan. A simple and pious vicar, after hearing his "too liberal" bishop preach on the gradual improvement and ultimate self-perfectivity of the human race, saying that there was no such thing as the Fall of Man, responded: "Well, my Lord, if there is no such thing as the Fall, how does it happen that we all are down?" That is the question that confronts us all. For we really are down. We do not love only the things that are good and pure and of good report, but frequently and persistently their opposites. With St. Paul we can all say: "The things I would, I do not; and the things I would not, those I do." Sin has the human race in its grip; and man alone is unable to break that grip, as all history and experience prove. We are lost unless some power from without intervenes to help and save us. That is exactly what Christianity says did happen.

God appeared within the scene. Sin is God's enemy as well as ours, spoiling His plan, ruining His creature. In the face of this, God cannot remain passive, inactive. God hates sin with all the intensity of His being, even while and just because He loves the sinner. He hates it as the mother hates the fever that is killing her child, hates because He

loves. He moves forth in all His omnipotence to overcome it.

Omnipotence is perhaps not the best word, for it makes people wonder why, if God is almighty, He cannot blot out sin immediately. But sin cannot be crushed by foot pounds. It cannot be undone by force, because sin is not physical, but spiritual. It is a matter of will. I sin because I will to sin; and God's problem is the vastly difficult one of making me will otherwise. Creation is easy, as compared with redemption. "Let there be light," said God, and it was done. But to turn a selfish heart into a loving one, to convert a polluted soul into a clean one, took the long agony of Gethsemane and the Cross.

Many years ago, a popular New England preacher went out west to preach to the Indians. He selected for his first sermon one that had greatly moved a Boston congregation. It was a simple and pathetic description of the sufferings of our Lord on the Cross. To his surprise and disappointment, his audience was not in the least affected. They were familiar with scenes of suffering. They had witnessed many warriors die in torture, bravely and stoically. The preacher came a second time, with a sermon that also had charmed his New England audiences. Its theme was the greatness and majesty of God. But his words seemed feeble to his primitive listeners. They had heard the voice of the Great Spirit in the thunder; they had seen His power in the tornado, and His majesty in the mountain peaks and the starry heavens. Once more the preacher came back; and this time he moved his audience. He combined the two sermons into one. He told them that the Great Spirit who spoke in the storm and flashed in the lightning was the very same who came in love and pity to His children; that it was none other than He who hung upon the Cross; that the tears and bloody sweat of Gethsemane arose

from the very heart of God Himself. That was a new idea, a tremendous thought. No wonder his hearers were stirred.

The essential thing to remember about the Cross is that it is God's act, not a man's. We are not only to feel sorrow for a noble life thus sacrificed; much less are we to think of the Father sacrificing the Son or the Son buying off the Father's wrath. The whole Godhead works together. There is no slightest division of Persons. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." "God was in Him, reconciling the world unto Himself." God's love, not His anger, was the moving cause. Jesus was God, working within the race and offering in our humanity the sacrifice of the perfect life. It is God who takes the initiative, God who provides the sacrifice, God who shares the suffering. The Cross adds a lineament to God's character, as man glimpses Him, and reveals the great mystery of God's eternally wounded heart. It was always there—"the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world"—but now it is revealed in power. Sin is the one burden that makes God's shoulders stoop. Sin is God's burden, not simply because it causes man to break the moral law, but because it corrupts and destroys the souls of men.

Some years ago on the stage I heard a line I have never forgotten. In view of man's perversity, his blindness and wickedness and cruelty, one of the characters cried out, "How terrible it must be to be God!" Zangwill in *The Cockpit* has the Queen say, "As I lie, sleepless, I think of the eternal insomnia of God." Truly it is not only God's peace, but His pain as well, that passes understanding. When we realize that it was no mere man who suffered on Calvary, but the Lord of Glory, we bow our heads in humble amazement at divine Love, and gratefully reach out toward the offered salvation.

The atonement is a tremendous mystery. The Cross is still foolishness to some, and a stumbling-block to others.

At the foot of the Cross man cries out in agony: "We are born in sin and tainted by inheritance and environment. We are not to blame. God is responsible and should bear the penalty." The Church points to the Cross and says, "God accepts the responsibility."

Again, man says, as he views all the pain and suffering and anguish of the world: "God cannot be good, cannot be love, and look upon all this. His heart would break." The Church points to the dying Figure on the Cross, and says, "His heart did break."

Once again, man cries: "It is all a terrible mystery; God is the great Unknown. It is arrogance, almost blasphemy, to say we know Him." The Church draws nearer, kneels at the foot of the Cross, and says, "We must worship the majesty we see."

PRAYER

Almighty and everlasting God, who, of Thy tender love towards mankind, hast sent Thy Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, to take upon Him our flesh and to suffer death upon the Cross, that all mankind should follow the example of His great humility, mercifully grant that we may both follow the example of His patience, and also be made partakers of His resurrection; through Jesus, Christ our Lord.

We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee, because by Thy Cross and precious Blood Thou hast redeemed the world. Save us and help us, we humbly beseech Thee, O Lord.



Thursday

THE GUILT OF SIN

Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction.—Psalm 103:3-4.

IN THESE CLAUSES, THE PSALMIST SETS FORTH THE THREEFOLD nature of sin and redemption. Sin is iniquity or guilt. Sin is disease or stain. Sin has power to destroy. To appreciate the fullness of God's redemption, consider sin under these three aspects: as it affects the conscience, the moral nature and the will; the guilt of sin, the stain of sin, and the power of sin.

Sin is no light thing. It is not "good in the making," something we will outgrow in our upward climb. Instead, it is rebellion, defiance of God. It is not merely negative, but positive. As St. Stephen says, it is resistance to the Holy Ghost, refusal to do what we know to be right. Such action merits punishment. We are all guilty, all in need of forgiveness.

But forgiveness is no simple and easy matter, either. In fact, outside of Christianity, there is no such thing. Nature knows no forgiveness. Any infraction of nature's laws is met with immediate and inevitable punishment. As the tree falleth, so it must lie. Where the lightning strikes, the scar remains. The ancients were painfully conscious of that fact. The great dramas of Æschylus and Sophocles are concerned with getting rid of sin, but find no alternative to the fact that sin must be ruthlessly penalized. From "Sing, goddess, the wrath of Achilles," the first words of classical

literature, to the contemporary novelist, crime and punishment constitute the problem. The same is true of non-Christian religions. The Hindus, for example, claim that the Christian doctrine of forgiveness of sin is immoral. And so it would be, if it meant simply letting bygones be bygones, saying it does not matter. But, despite much popular teaching, Christianity says no such thing. Though it offers full and free forgiveness to sinners, it does not do so at the expense of the moral law. Somehow the claims of the moral law must be satisfied, some penalty must be paid; and since man cannot pay it, God does. That is the meaning of the Cross.

If it be asked why God cannot forgive without all this travail, all this pain and suffering, the answer is that it is not because of any arbitrary unwillingness on God's part, but because of the very nature of justice and goodness. A simple human analogy may help. A father loves, and wishes to forgive his child some wrongful act; but he must do it in such a way as not to make the child think lightly of his sin. Some punishment is necessary. The story is told of an ancient king whose son had committed an offense, the penalty of which was to have both eyes put out. The father, yearning to forgive and spare his son, yet had the duty of obeying and upholding the law. How could he do both? When his son was brought before him as judge, he had one of his son's eyes put out and then one of his own, thus both upholding the law and sparing his son. Thereafter, whenever the son looked upon his father's face, he had a vivid reminder both of the awfulness of sin and the depth of his father's love. No, it is not because of any arbitrariness on God's part, or any reluctance to forgive, that suffering is involved in forgiveness, but because He is not only love but justice and goodness as well. All three are essential to the moral constitution of the universe. The moral law

must be upheld. Sin must be punished; and, since man cannot pay the penalty, God does.

There was no other good enough
To pay the price of sin,
He only could unlock the gate
Of heaven and let us in.

The Cross alone makes forgiveness possible. It shows how God cares about sin. In the face of it, no light and easy views of sin are possible.

Forgiveness is our first and greatest need. We want to be free of the sense of guilt that haunts us. We want to know that we are reinstated in God's favor. We want to be able to look up into our Father's face with joy, and not continually to be hiding from Him. "Forgive us our trespasses," we earnestly pray; and we may do so with assurance because of Him "who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." Not of merit, but of God's free grace, are we forgiven. Without the Cross we have no assurance.

Not the labor of my hands
Can fulfill the law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone.

But while this forgiveness is full and free, it is not without conditions. There is something we have to do about it, and Holy Scripture leaves us in no doubt about our part. "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly father forgive you." Repentance toward God and forgiveness of our fellows are the indispensable conditions of our own forgiveness. Are we fulfilling them? Have we confessed our sins to God? Are we ready to forgive from our hearts all who have in any way wronged or injured us?

At a mission in England, a little girl came to the missionary to confess that she had stolen several pennies from the till in her father's shop. She was very unhappy about it. She had repented, but could not find peace. The missionary then suggested that she make reparation by returning the money, to which she replied that she had done so several times over. Then she was asked if she had told her father, at which she was terrified, and said she would not dare. After much persuasion she agreed to tell her father, and returned the next day with smiling face to tell the missionary she had followed his advice. "And what did your father do?" he asked, to which she replied, "Nothing; he just kissed me." This simple story illustrates a truth we need to remember, namely, that God's love is not the result of our repentance. We do not repent to change the wrath of an angry God into love. He loves us all the time, loves all men indiscriminately, loves sinners and saints, loves us when we sin and when we do well. His love, in fact, anticipates and causes our repentance. There can be no doubt of our acceptance.

PRAYER

Almighty and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that Thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all those who are penitent, create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of Thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus, Christ our Lord.



Friday

THE STAIN OF SIN

Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin.—Psalm 51:2.

Thou shalt purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean.—Psalm 51:7.

IN MY FIRST PARISH, IT WAS MY DUTY AND PRIVILEGE TO minister to a rector emeritus through a long illness. He was a good and saintly man and, on one occasion after he had received the Blessed Sacrament, preceded by its comforting assurance of pardon and absolution, he said to me: "Forgiveness is not enough. What we need is cleansing, purging." This is the experience of all thoughtful persons, for sin is not merely guilt but stain.

The stain of sin is its most evident characteristic. Even people who do not feel the guilt and will not admit the power, are aware of the stain. No action is without its result; sin always leaves its mark. If the world were at once forgiven the guilt and released from the power, the stain of sin would remain. It is evident in history, whose pages are red with the age-long tale of the reign of sin. It is evident in our social life, as witness our prisons, hospitals and insane asylums, with the maimed bodies, twisted minds and warped souls of their inmates. It is evident in ourselves, in our dulled conscience, enfeebled intellects and hard hearts, as well as in our predisposition to sin again. Worst of all, the stain extends from us to others with whom we have been in contact. The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children, and the sins we have committed with others con-

tinue, far beyond our knowledge or control. "Take my influence," said a converted sinner on his deathbed, "and bury it with me." If only that could be done!

When the penitent is reinstated in the Father's love, when he experiences the comforting realization that God holds nothing against him, his gratitude and peace are still somewhat disturbed by the poignant recollection that the mark or stain of sin remains in him and in his fellows. What would he not give to have it washed away!

But what can he do about it? Certainly he cannot remove it himself. He has no power to turn back the clock, to undo what has been done. Like Lady Macbeth, he may forever rub his hands and cry, "Out, damned spot!"—but the spot remains. "Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my hand?" cries Macbeth, and then answers: "No, this hand will rather the multitudinous seas incarnadine." So the stain remains in one's own life, in an enfeebled body, weakened will, polluted imagination and dulled conscience, and it continues its evil work in others. No amount of remorse will undo evil influence, no amount of self-effort will cleanse a soul. Nor will it do simply to forget. Sins of the past may easily fade out of our memories, and tempt us to think that they are gone. But it may not be. A saintly old priest was once telling of a visit he made to his childhood home: how he saw the house where he had been born, the orchard and the swimming-pool, and finally the schoolhouse. There he was surprised and ashamed to see a black mark, still on the wall, where in a fit of temper he had thrown an ink-bottle at another boy. He had forgotten about it; but nothing had been done to remove it, and so the ink was still there. Forgotten sins are not necessarily forgiven sins.

These are disturbing truths; and if they were all, the outlook would be dark indeed. But God, in the richness of His mercy, stands ready not only to acquit us of guilt, but to

remove the stain. Not only doth He forgive our iniquities; He also healeth our disease. He not only justifies, but sanctifies. Too few Christians realize that most comforting truth, though it was beautifully set forth by the prophet, centuries before Christ: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Years ago, in a mission in London, the question was asked, "Can God make me as though I had never sinned?" That puts the issue clearly. Is God's forgiveness limited to acquittal of guilt, reinstatement in His divine favor? Must the forgiven person go halt and maimed through all eternity, something less of a person than he might have been had he never sinned? The answer of many would be "Yes"; and to some extent, so far as this world is concerned, that is true. A man's soul may be saved, but the ravages of past sin in body and mind remain. The disease is healed, but the scars are still there. Years ago I would have thought that to be the whole answer and that the redeemed sinner—which is all of us—must humbly accept such limitations as his due and be grateful for his forgiveness. But now I am sure that is false. It is a libel on God's power and goodness.

While it may be true as regards this life, God has eternity to work in; and to assume that He cannot remove the stain of sin in all its consequences means that He is in some measure defeated. Yes, in His good time He can, and will, undo the ravages of sin, and make us the persons He intended us to be. Somewhere in God's archives are pictures of you and me as we were meant to be when we were created, and as we would have become had we always lived and acted according to God's will. What a painful contrast between that picture and our own sin-stained lives! But by God's grace we may still achieve it. What a glorious incentive that is to true and full repentance! To believe not only

that we shall be reinstated in His favor, but that He will make us as though we had never sinned!

And it is God's doing, not ours. All we can do is to come as humble suppliants, relying upon divine grace, remembering that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin."

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling.
Naked, come to thee for dress;
Helpless, look to thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly.
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.

PRAYER

Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid, cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love Thee, and worthily magnify Thy holy name; through Christ our Lord.



Saturday

THE POWER OF SIN

He saveth thy life from destruction.—Psalm 103:4.

SIN IS NOT MERELY GUILT NEEDING FORGIVENESS, NOR ONLY stain needing cleansing, but power exercising an almost omnipotent control over the wills of men. As we strive after the higher life, we are acutely conscious of this power working against us, defeating us at every turn, baffling our most earnest efforts, dulling our conscience, and predisposing us to sin again. The sins that shocked us years ago no longer bother us. We rationalize and excuse ourselves by the thought that perhaps we were too rigid or puritanical, and now have become wiser and more tolerant in our attitude. We judge ourselves by prevailing social standards, instead of by God's law, and mistake the torpor of soul that ensues for a heavenly peace. Until earnestly we try to break some long-established habit, refrain from something we know in our hearts to be wrong, we are not conscious of sin's power. But as soon as we make the earnest effort, we discover that we are indeed tied and bound with the chain of our sins. Like St. Paul, we know that "we do the things we would not, and what we would not, that we do." With him we are ready to cry: "O wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from the body of this death?"

As the years pass, the power of sin becomes ever greater. We are often apt to think that later on, when we are more mature or in different circumstances, it will be easier to overcome the sins we detest. But it is not so. The passage of time makes taming sin not easier but harder, because

habit has become more fixed. We must not procrastinate with a weakness, or run away from it. Sometime we must fight it out or perish. Let us not deceive ourselves. There will never be a time easier than *now*.

The story is told of an impoverished old man who called on Rossetti to ask his opinion of a sketch he had recently made. The painter, after examining it carefully, was forced to tell his visitor that it had not much merit. As the old man turned sadly to leave, he suddenly pulled forth from the pocket of his shabby coat another sketch, on paper yellow with age. On seeing it, the great Rossetti became interested and remarked, "This sketch shows power and great possibilities. Who is the young man who did that?" With a sigh his visitor departed, saying, "I was that young man." The tale points its own moral and one that applies to many a life. Hood expresses a similar thought in the familiar lines:

I remember, I remember
The fir trees tall and high;
I used to think their slender tops
Were close against the sky.
It was a childish ignorance,
But now 'tis little joy
To know I'm further off from heaven
Than when I was a boy.

Yes, the power of sin is ever with us and we need deliverance. To say, "If I were forgiven today, I should be just as bad again tomorrow," ignores a most important part of redemption. To save a child's life from a virulent fever is one thing, but to keep the child thereafter in full health and strength is another; and this is what God promises to do for the soul. Not just forgiveness and healing for past sins, but power over present and future temptations is His promise; not only pardon at death, but grace and power to live victoriously.

But how is this to come about? How are we to conquer the sins that so easily beset us? As always, the answer con-

tains two elements, the human and the divine, our own earnest efforts and God's grace. The most important thing *we can ourselves do* is to keep alive our disgust and hatred of sin. Says Cardinal Newman "Our great security against sin lies in our being shocked at it." This we can accomplish by trying to see sin as God sees it.

Some years ago, in a Southern town, there lived two sisters: the younger a light and frivolous person, the older more staid and controlled. On her deathbed, the mother charged the older one to take care of the younger. For some time all went well; but one day, on returning home, the older sister found a note from the younger sister saying that she had gone away forever and that there was no use trying to find her. Immediately the older sister packed her bags and started on a search which led from place to place. At length she found her sister, in a house of ill-fame in one of our great cities. With no scolding, she threw her arms about her sister and kissed her. Then she removed hat and coat, saying that she had come to stay. The younger girl was horrified, and cried, "You do not know where you are. You could not stay here." But she did; and the younger did her best to shield her sister from all sights and sounds which would shock her pure and sensitive nature, with the result that gradually she came to see her own sins through the pure eyes of her sister. The two left that place, to begin life anew. So our Blessed Lord has come to this world of ill-fame. He suffers as only the all-pure and all-holy can, in the presence of sin. If we learn to see sin as He sees sin, we shall be in the way of salvation.

The *divine factor* is the grace of God, whereby He imparts to us His very life. "I am come," says our Lord, "that ye might have life and have it more abundantly." The full atonement includes not only the Crucifixion but the Resurrection, not only the death but the victorious life of the Christ. As St. Paul tells us: "If, when we were enemies, we

were *reconciled* to God by the *death* of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by *His Life*." What Christ did *for* us, He must now do *in* us. Christians are capable of attaining a much higher standard than they do; and God expects it and provides for it. We are not simply to obey God's law or follow Christ's example, but to be "in Christ," that "He may dwell in us and we in Him," so that henceforth we can say with St. Paul, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

By God's grace the perfect humanity of Christ is made available to us. His virtue, His strength, His purity, His holiness, may be ours, enabling us to "do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth us." This higher, spiritual life is not our own, but the gift of God. We can neither create it nor earn it, but only receive it. It is imparted to earnest souls in a multitude of ways, but particularly in the Sacraments of Christ's ordaining. In baptism we are united to Him, and in the Sacrament of the Altar our spiritual life is quickened and renewed. "I am the living Bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this Bread he shall live forever." "As the living Father hath sent Me and I live by the Father: so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me." The grace and power of the ever-living Christ are at our disposal, to save us from the power of sin.

Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee:
Let the water and the blood
From Thy side, a healing flood,
Be of sin the double cure,
Save me from its *guilt and power*.

PRAYER

O God, whose nature and property is ever to have mercy and to forgive, receive our humble petitions; and though we be tied and bound with the chain of our sins, yet let the pitifulness of Thy great mercy loose us; for the honor of Jesus, Christ our Mediator and Advocate.



THIRD WEEK

REDEEMER OF THE WORLD

Monday

HAS CHRIST THE CAPACITY TO SAVE OUR WORLD?

READING: Isaiah 62:1 to 63:9

HIGH ABOVE THE CITY OF RIO GRANDE DO SUL THERE IS a colossal statue of Him, called *Christus Redemptor*. A visitor from the United States, as he boarded his ship for the homeland, found himself reluctant to leave the statue, which had become a source of strength to him. He went wistfully toward the stern for one final glimpse. But the city, veiled in smoke and haze, seemed to have shut out the figure for which he sought. About to abandon the quest, something in him said, "Look higher"; and there, far above the blanket of fog in which the people played and toiled, stood the statue, the redeeming Christ.

So, in our modern cities, the Savior does appear to have been obscured, sometimes almost blotted out. The Greeks built their towns around an acropolis, a high eminence on which were erected the temples to their gods. And today, from any point in the big modern city of Athens, from the busy port of the Piræus or from far at sea, one can lift one's eyes at any time to the Acropolis and reassure one-

self of the enduring spiritual significance of man's struggle in workshop and market-place. Our cities are not so built. There come days of desolation through doubt, when we lose confidence that there is a higher meaning in it all. But the truth is merely that we have thickened the blanket of haze by our machine civilization, and that the Christ who redeems, who is capable of achieving the great redemption of ourselves and of our race, still stands, ready and able. Yet we may fail entirely to be aware of Him until we remember to look higher.

The initial privilege which one finds in membership in the Household of Faith is that, though one sympathizes deeply, one need not dwell in the darkness of despair about life and the future which is so prevalent around us. To participate in the Lord's Prayer is to recognize that there is One whom it is sensible to ask to deliver us from evil. "But deliver us from evil"—surely anyone who is sensitive to the mind of our times recognizes that such is the universal preoccupation. May it become instead the universal prayer!

On every continent, serious minds reveal this hall mark of our era, the sense of inadequacy and the search for some means of world deliverance. The modern counterpart of the impact of the good news of the Gospel on the earliest hearers is the consciousness of Christians that there standeth a Saviour, keeping watch o'er man's mortality, capable of accomplishing deliverance. It is the prerogative of Christians to face without fear the problems of a fearing world. It is our human part to put ourselves at His disposal as instruments for bringing in the Kingdom. Though many hope for some quicker collective solution through social action, the changing of this world for good awaits individuals who first will make the spirit of the Kingdom of Heaven a reality in their own lives.

It is here that we encounter a second cause of present

spiritual inadequacy. In our individualism and self-confidence we have rather lost the capacity to obey an invisible Master, to follow with absolute fidelity the prescriptions of our Spiritual Director. When modern people grow alarmed about themselves, they visit a doctor or psychiatrist, and out of their dependence and need bring themselves to trust in his treatment. But city life and a superficial education have deprived many of the childlike capacity to repose that sort of trust in religious guidance. We reveal a surprising readiness to rewrite the Gospel to suit our plans and dispositions, to evade its demands and, indeed, to play fast and loose with the authority of our Lord. Presumption has proved to be the supreme sin of modern civilization. In the stead of giving reverence and having holy faith, man has patronized his Creator. Yet it is strange how readily the fulfilling adequacy of God flows into that life which repents. One hears the challenging promise of Jesus to that woman in the Gospel, endlessly repeated: "According to your faith, be it unto you."

Finally, we do well to recognize, in Christ's art of making and remaking human nature, how much He sees fit to leave to the individual. We find that He will not answer all of our questions. In the days of His flesh, Jesus exercised surprising restraint with His questioners. Although He knew the answers, He patiently sought to lead people to think them out themselves, asking, "What thinkest thou?" His sublime faith that God had not left any man without the light is revealed in His ejaculation, "Why do ye not of your own selves judge the thing that is right?" How well He knows our preference for running away from our true selves, and for asking friends to comfort us in our compromises.

And so, in Christ Jesus, we find an authority exercised not in force, but in love; not external, but internal. He will not dictate. He rather stands by while we recover our

true selves in His presence. His voice always finds its echo in the secret witness of the soul. He points out enough of the way. He who runs may read and ponder the New Testament, and see plainly the sort of conduct which shuts out and stifles the good life: covetousness and self-indulgence, self-righteousness and hypocrisy, pride and lust. And the way to grow in the Christlike spirit is also there revealed: the way of prayer and integrity of purpose, of penitence and persistence, of humility with God, and compassion toward our contemporaries.

But infinitely more than teacher, He becomes for us the motive, the incentive for new striving. Christ still wages war against sin, with hope. With Him as Friend one begins to discern the self one might be, the self in which one had begun to lose confidence, but which the Saviour has steadily envisioned and believed in. And reverently one perceives that by His regenerative influence Christ is retracing some lost image, nature's likeness to the Father from whom one is sprung. The Master shows us the "why" of moral responsibility, by reminding us that the Father watches and cares. He reveals that our faults, if fewer, are more serious than we think. He enables us to see that our ambitions need not be wearingly complex; that there is one thing only we are here to do. For has not Jesus simplified the goal of life to the utmost clarity in bidding us first to seek to grow like the Father, "that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven"?

The problems of the world's salvation in such critical and confused times, we cannot approach theoretically or irresponsibly. Mankind is restive, on the move, in the mood for action. Only yesterday, in Genoa, I watched troops debark from the conquest of Abyssinia. As I write, the mountainous coast of Spain is visible, and behind it the ghastly horrors of civil war. The salvation which is in Christ we must promptly lay hold upon, to recall us to our rightful minds,

and to take effect before we venture to enter upon a day's activity. What a high urgency that we become agents of peace on earth, good-will among men! Yet we go forth in this spirit only when we have first found ourselves in God, our way of life in Jesus, the Christ.

PRAYER

Strong Son of God, who dost bear the world's burden and dost share the world's pain, we bring to Thy compassion the broken hopes of this fear-tormented world. Take into thine all-availing hands the plans and purposes of Thy Church. Send us forth in humble service and in holy might to meet the world's need. Bring Thy strength to the rescue of our weakness, and enable us to contribute toward the great Peace.



Tuesday

THE BUILDING OF THE WILL

READING: St. Mark 10:35 to end

MANY HARD-HEADED MODERN MEN OF BUSINESS CONSIDER religion vague, impractical, nebulous. The religious man today feels himself regarded as was Joseph by his brethren: "Behold, this dreamer cometh!" Yet this American pragmatism need not intimidate us. It is often overdone. An immigrant girl who had been in this country but a few months, employed as nurse, observed: "You Americans are so excessively 'praktisch.' You make everything you do amount to something, which is nothing."

In the quests of the spirit, we must be patient when demonstrable results are not forthcoming on schedule. The spirit, as Our Lord noted, is like the wind. It bloweth where it listeth, and thou canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth. A man of secondary capacity may plod away with tyrannous efficiency and prove nothing of enduring significance. The man who is important, in business as in art or in science, is the man of imagination who, on rare occasions, comes by a new idea. If even infrequently, in a year or in a lifetime, we are privileged to glimpse the vision splendid, or to find the flash of a new perspective, during Church services or in private meditation, we may well conclude that we can never afford to absent ourselves from such pursuits, even though we traverse many desert spaces where our spiritual faculties appear barrenly numb.

Jesus believed in communion with the Father, in lavishing attention upon Him without narrow calculation of daily result. His confidence was absolute that God was the creative source of fruitfulness, and that the rewards of prayerfulness would appear in due time and in profusion.

In striking contrast, however, to the vagueness of most Eastern religious teachers, Christ embodied the practicality that has become the strength of the West. He emphasized the tonic importance of building, above the deep intent, the deed. He taught us to estimate the spiritual pretensions of those about us by their fruits. Religion, to Him, was never introspective daydreaming, an escape from reality, an opiate for the people, but a daily discipline of the will and a vital partnership with God in doing His work. Though He recognized that a man's influence derives first from what he is—for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh—Jesus yet enjoined upon us the importance of doing. Instinctively we feel that Our Lord cannot be deceived by mere professions. It is He who detected the vast difference between Pharisee and Publican. Still, in just impatience, He must often cry: "Why call ye Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

In all candor, most of us will recognize a tendency to gravitate toward the occupations that are congenial, and to leave the duties that are distasteful. An eminent psychologist has pointed out that this tendency is at the source of modern moral weakness. We have lost the sense of the importance, for our moral and psychical health, of doing what we do not like. Especially the introspective are in jeopardy, unless they force themselves to join with others in the public responsibility of Church and State. We follow at our peril inward psychological lines of least resistance.

No one is born with a developed will. We must grow wills. Early in life our natural weaknesses begin to be re-

vealed to us: to one, indolence; to another, vanity; to one, drink; to another, sex; to one, self-centeredness; to another, timid anxiety. Thenceforward we are somewhat like a man who knows himself slightly, not incurably, addicted to dope. There is always a way of instant relief by giving in to our tendency. But after each surrender we are the more abject slaves. Salvation lingers until we can strengthen moral muscles and build up the will to the point of a virtual incapacity to yield. The goal is to achieve that margin of strength of character that spells control. The man to be envied above all others in this world is the man who has won self-mastery.

Those who most appreciate the redemptive capacity of religion are they who have tested it in their own experience. A theological student who had been a victim of a habit commonly regarded as shameful and degrading became one of the most compelling Christian influences to young people. His power was pinioned on what the Saviour had meant to him in a bitter, and an ultimately victorious, struggle.

We may well conclude that Christ will mean much to us as we draw upon Him more directly for help in specific struggles. Not a few Christians keep score on themselves, and employ notebooks or diaries in their private devotions, because of their self-knowledge that otherwise they tend to vagueness and evasion of vital issues. When that blind man came to the Master, beseeching Him in a general way to have mercy on him, he must have been surprised at the abruptness of the Nazarene's counter-question, "What wouldst thou that I should do unto thee?" He answered, "Lord, that I might receive my sight." And the Saviour readily and precisely fulfilled his request.

Some of us have been pointing for years in the Lord's general direction, without yet letting Him know specifically what we seek. There is an excess of vague emotion in

present-day religion, and a shortage of honest, earnest intention. It is the opportunity of each of us to avoid vagueness in religion and to prove to ourselves, and then to others, its power and reality by confronting ourselves honestly, in the presence of the Master, and invoking His help for specific needs. Yes, the time has come for greater definiteness in our religion. Christ's genius is not for general uplift, for diffuse "inspiration," but to seek and to save that which without Him would be lost.

PRAYER

O Conquering Christ, who dost ever break through the molds of selfish custom, we beseech Thee to marshal the forces of a new day. Recall us from the selfishness and presumption of our devious ways. Enlist us in Thine unwearied purpose to redeem the world. Prepare us for the sacrifice involved. And draw us closer to Thyself, our indomitable Lord.



Wednesday

SALVATION INTO FELLOWSHIP

READING: Ephesians 2:8 to end

THE INCOMPARABLE BOON, THROUGH CHRIST'S REDEMPTION, is relief from self, release from self, deliverance from loneliness and isolation into inward harmony with God, in whom we live and move and have our being, and into outward harmony with our fellow men.

It is this sense of being in a dungeon of self-absorption, and inadequate in our personal relations, that drives many of us to religion. A considerable proportion of the persons who turn to our Churches are those who are painfully conscious of many kinds of incapacity, of various indexes of inferiority. We find ourselves infected with germs of pride, exclusiveness, malice, sensitiveness, or ill-will; and we turn again to Christ that He may breathe upon us the Holy Spirit of modesty and humility, of tact and mercifulness. We need Divine help to enable us to make right adjustment in the sphere of daily human relations. We watch other Christians, and crave not only their fortunate personal touch, but that we may save life from the doom of triviality by meaning something to others, by achieving personal influence.

If one sought to characterize the Master's plan for mankind in briefest compass, one would affirm that He came to earth bringing the spirit of fellowship. His recommendation is a filial relationship with the unseen God, expressed in friendly relations with fellow human beings.

Christ is not primarily a prophet, lawgiver, moralist, or teacher of ethics. He is a loving Saviour winning men into the magnetic field of His redemptive fellowship.

Have we not in the Christlike spirit an answer to every problem of men and nations? Our homes lack harmony and peace because of the shortness of our tempers and sympathies. Our offices, factories, and corporations recognize the need of personnel officers to provide the human touch, which should spontaneously spring from Christian hearts. Our hospitals and asylums are filled with folk whose bleak house is often the result of retiring into private worlds and building the state of life as if *L'état, c'est moi*. The rough rivalries and passions of business and political life come from the jarring discord of many self-interests. "Society," in so far as it is a self-indulgent stratum of the whole population, glorying in exclusiveness, secretes an infection sufficient to spoil in each generation children who might have been not only the privileged, but benefactors and leaders of mankind. And the un-Christian spirit of self-righteous and predatory national selfishness and rivalry threatens with destruction a world that yearns for peace on earth, good-will toward men.

Can we not see Christ Jesus, the Saviour of the world, standing above us, with grave and searching eyes, His arms stretched out upon a cross to embrace mankind, majestically pleading with us to recognize the hell on earth caused by exclusiveness and self-interest? The Kingdom of Heaven on earth begins where the spirit of inclusiveness and love binds up the bruised and broken-hearted victims of earth's estranging prejudices. Still He calls, "Sirs, ye are brethren." Still from the Mount He proclaims the secrets of happiness, which the world has disdained. Fortunate are the merciful, the meek, the unacquisitive hungerers after the kingdom of God and His righteousness, the pure of heart and motive, the peace-makers.

Only as the sense of Christ's awesome humility, patience, courtesy, long-suffering love, in our midst, brings us to a great contrition that we have harbored superior and exclusive attitudes, shall we claim our part in the world-wide mission to spread the spirit of reconciliation.

Only as we are renewed in the spirit of our minds, so that this mind is in us which was also in Christ Jesus, only as we divest ourselves of ugly, hardened prejudices and discern our essential brotherhood with those whom we have despised, shall we realize the great emancipation that Christ the Deliverer has opened up to us by His life and death.

History is the record of how heartlessness and heedlessness have spelled helplessness for millions. A surprisingly patient world, which has stomached for long centuries man's inhumanity to man, is now in ferment against the indignities that selfish or sightless people have exacted or condoned. Should the masses further succumb to the spirit of reprisal and of hate, there would be unleashed upon the bruised earth mountainous and irremediable woes. There never was a time when a clear discernment and a ready execution of Christ's alternative was of more moment to mankind.

Yet who can practice the spirit of forbearing love under provocation, without the assistance of the grace of God? The inestimable worth of Jesus' mission to the sons of men consists not primarily in the publishing, once upon a time, of good news of a better way, but in the mystery of His unabated help ever since, in ever widening circles through His Holy Spirit to every son of man who ever sincerely sought to put this spirit into practice.

The ever practical Christ was not content to give us this spirit *in vacuo*. He opened the way for the Christian Church, the original *koinonia*—fellowship in common—in and through which His followers might express this

spirit of brotherliness. Today the Christian Church, an association of high and low, rich and poor, of all races and conditions, where we meet for communion with each other in communion with God, is the best means of making fellowship actual. To countless persons, membership in this organism of the Body of Christ, however homely and motley an assembly it appears to those on the outside, has proved the means of learning that no man liveth unto himself, that we are members one of another, that we have nothing which we have not received. Here is a corrective of the selfish astigmatism which is the great original sin, and here the gateway to life in the bonds of love. Many since have echoed in human experience the words of the first disciple whom Jesus loved and to whom He taught the mysteries of fellowship: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

PRAYER

Thou inclusive Christ, the Good Shepherd of mankind, who hast never wearied in the struggle for the brotherhood of man, in pain we confess our exclusiveness and our estranging prejudice. Grant unto us understanding hearts. Clothe us in Thy love-anointed sympathy, that, rejoicing in Thy ministry of reconciliation, we may walk the lanes of earth as children of the Father in Heaven, for Thy sake, and for that of the world.



Thursday

I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVETH

READING: St. John 13:1-15

THE REDEMPTION OF MANKIND IS A MATTER QUITE AS PRACTICAL and concrete as next year's food-supply. Either there exists some Power capable of completing, enlightening, developing humankind out of our present infantilism, or there is none.

The pressure upon our minds of the aggregate of modern skepticism in thought and in literature forces the suggestion that there is *no* redemptive factor. Formerly, to improve life, men have trusted successively to political emancipation, to education, to science, to material invention, to psychology. Now that we are mature, we see that the stubborn trouble is in the nature of man, and that there is, as a matter of grim fact, almost no effective redemptive action now in process.

Serious skeptics press such inferences, and instance them by the results they observe. Inside the redemptive society, the Christian Church, heroic language about a Cross is frequent; yet tame pedestrian performances, timid and gingerly experiments in any adventure beyond self-regarding caution are the rule. Instead of radiant souls, the world sees too often in the membership of the Church dreary personalities, depressing and depressed: Church-goers who, in spite of their claim to feed on heavenly manna, seem lean, thin, and weak; despite their claim to a conquest of fear, anxious, worried about many things. Yet the Church

of Christ marches forward, even with her sorry incubus of compromisers and camp followers.

Participants appreciate the exacting balance of being that one must achieve before the Christian graces become resident in the soul. They understand why the process does not validate itself in lives that evade our Lord's clear requirement of self-dedication. They cling, moreover, to the witness of the saints, not alone those enshrined in history, for in this age too, Christ has His own, that the Lord can reproduce His likeness in others. The religious person affirms with conviction, above the strident clamor of modern skepticism: "I know that my Redeemer liveth!" It is a deep inward knowledge, not of the sort susceptible to demonstration, but the most intimate and indestructible kind of knowledge there is. Though the majority of sincere souls within the Church may feel themselves still waiting to know, there are not lacking those who are sure. Most of us must traverse some years, seeking to sustain our religion, before we arrive at the point where our religion begins to sustain us.

We waste time trying to promote parishes that are neglected for the sound reason that nothing strikingly regenerative or upbuilding is taking place there. A poor school may be successfully recruited for a while by publicity; but only when a great headmaster appears, who accomplishes the striking feat of transforming boys who have become a concern to their parents, does the waiting list grow into the hundreds. Fathers and mothers implore him to take and remake their sons. So it was with Jesus in Galilee. They pressed upon Him, for His demonstrated curative powers. Let us cease protecting and promoting the Church. Rather, let us make sure that she renders a significant service of redemptive power to the community, and the people will then be quick to recognize her value.

It has been well pointed out that the Christian life, to

fulfill its true function of conveying the light of the beauty of Christ's holiness, must have the two requisite characteristics of an incandescent bulb, integrity and contact. At the Last Supper, when the Redeemer suggested that one present would betray Him, they all asked: "Lord, is it I?" It is wholesome that we each search our consciences from time to time to make sure that we are truly sincere, and do not betray the Christ whose name we bear. Hypocrisy is the easiest of sins.

And if we hope to attain the Christian goal we must accent, to a degree unusual in the modern world, contact with the Source. The Galilean's secret was in His communion with the Father. Without this He forfeited His power: "I can do nothing of Myself." He taught us to recognize that the sap of Christian vitality and love must be fed into our natures: "I am the Vine, ye are the branches. Without Me ye can do nothing."

St. Paul affirmed: "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me." Yet consider the intensity of the great Apostle's inner fellowship with Christ. A few casual minutes a day for us can hardly be expected to suffice. Since the mass of the men and women enrolled in the Church are not displaying the joy and power and devotion of the life of the Spirit, the inference is clear that they are out of touch with God.

Our Lord Himself, anticipating His crucifixion, provided the most intimate, precious, and satisfying means of touch with His person, through the Sacrament of Holy Communion. While other services have commended themselves to the experience of some, this "way" has proven itself in the experience of countless millions of persons. The Sacrament that is a perpetual memory of His death and Holy Sacrifice holds us steadily in the atmosphere of His self-giving love. To await Him with hearts saying: "As watchmen look for the morning, so do we look for Thee, O Christ"; to come in fellowship and in mysterious solitude; to prepare

in the mood of "Let all mortal flesh keep silence"; to lay bare all our failures and needs, and then all our weariness upon Him lean; to speak to Him as to our most intimate One; to reach out to Him reverent, appealing hands, and then to know and sense that Jesus of Nazareth passes by, that He comes *even unto us* with His invigorating: "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world"—this is ineffably to experience the Christian life. And when a far larger proportion of us discover the inestimable privilege of the Holy Eucharist at the dawn of the first day of the week, discover in our hearts the Psalmist's assertion, "The dew of Thy birth is of the womb of the morning," there will be a new dawning among us of the lost radiance of the earliest Christian fellowship.

The Emmaus road is still mainly traveled in Christian practice by little groups of two or three, while the great body of nominal adherents of the Church content themselves solely with the conventional service of Psalm and Preaching. But it is incontrovertibly true that just as those two wistful travelers to the village of Emmaus on the first Easter Day found their hearts burning within them as their strang Companion made Himself known to them in the breaking of bread, so today those who seek Him at the Holy Communion do discern the real presence of Christ. They find that the risen Lord who still haunts the margins of human experience, has not failed His pledged rendezvous.

PRAYER

Christ of the Upper Room, out of my soul's darkness I grope toward the Light of the world. Up the stairs from my earthmindedness I climb toward the place where Thou art. Out of the hunger of my weakness I lift my hands to be fed of Thee and grasp the chalice of Thy holiness, that the soiledness of my self may be burned and purged away. O Christ, redeem, revive, renew me, for Thy mercy's sake.



Friday

A GARDEN OR A CROSS

READING: St. Matthew 26:36-46

A TALL MEMBER OF THE BLACK WATCH, WHOSE VISION OF Christ came on a night of desolation while lying wounded out on No Man's Land, and who is now an effective clergyman of the Church, avers that until that night he had always been a drifter. To follow Jesus is to learn preparedness through prayer, to meet crises at prayer before they come upon us to take us unawares.

Jesus emerged from the forty days in the Wilderness decided and decisive. His subsequent arresting impact upon the folk of the countryside was not an accident, but a consequence of His spiritual decision. The victory at the Cross similarly was prepared for, was largely won, on the battlefield of Gethsemane.

Generations of Christian piety have concentrated upon the Cross. Our age is shy of pretensions and mock heroics which may have a hollow ring or leave a hypocritical impression. Gethsemane, if understood, strikes close to our actual circumstances. Let us devote the two final meditations of this week to watching Our Lord in His great moment of decision, that we may learn to meet our moral and spiritual crises fortified by the steadying hand of God.

We read that He went, "as He was wont," into the place called Gethsemane. To ponder the pathway in prayer had become His practice. We all instinctively dread decisions. Often we avoid or postpone them, hoping that somehow

matters will solve themselves. The Master walked out to meet His decisions, with God.

"And when He was at the place" He recognized instinctively that He was at a place where it was important to consider the course and make strong His resolution. "He began to be sorrowful and very heavy." Instinct with the joy of life, the grim prospect of death at thirty-three was less palatable to Him than it might be to another who had never tasted the abundant sense of living. A voluntary subjection to death upon the Cross was going to test all His mettle. He looked toward His friends, and breathed the hope that such a testing might never be their lot: "Pray ye that ye enter not into temptation." In plain words, He was being tempted.

The Garden of Gethsemane, a favorite haunt of Jesus' nature-loving spirit, is in the suburbs of Jerusalem. A garden, in springtime at the Pascal moon, beckoned as a symbol of the love of life. Obviously it was easy to think that life could possibly be put to more advantage if extended, and that a return into Galilee was justifiable, instead of going back to the city to meet the doom of the sinister intrigue and venomous hate that would torture His body without mercy.

A garden or a cross?—that was the alternative to be faced by this man from the hills outside Jerusalem, in the spring of the year. And however faint the parallel, some such decision lies in wait for every son of man who ever sets out to follow Jesus of Nazareth. Every man comes to a fork in the road where one path appears to lead up the steep, rocky way of duty, and more than duty, of self-giving; the other to a compromise or alternative that has many good and plausible reasons to justify it. What shall it be—a garden or a cross—for you and me?

Most of us believe inveterately that we can somehow combine the two and have a bit, but not too much, of

each. We never allow ourselves to face the stark issue. And thus we are drifters, not followers of Christ.

Jesus did not disguise His human shrinking from the ordeal of the Cross: "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." And yet the decision to be made at that hour was built upon a former one. He had already decided that His own comfort would be no consideration.

In order really to see, we must be singled-eyed. Nothing blurs and distorts our judgments like self-interest. When a clergyman complained to the late Bishop Brent that he had sought in vain the guidance of the Holy Spirit about a call to another parish, that great spiritual seer replied in effect: "First bring yourself to the point where you are willing to accept whatever appears to be the will of God, when your own will does not count. Then you are apt to find revealed to you the way toward which God is leading you." "He who willeth to do, shall know." Gethsemane has been given to us as a great example of the religious way to meet our decisions.

In a certain sense the Christian religion, though it asks of us much more than self-denials, indeed the very denial of self, is not so bleak and stark as it often appears. Founded on faith in the love of God, it assumes that God knows far better how to provide us happiness than we ourselves. Surely none is more pathetic than those who devote life primarily to seeking that will-of-the-wisp, happiness. Joy is an elusive thing, appearing when least expected, a by-product of right living. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, with rare discernment, saw that it was for the joy that was set before Him that Christ endured the Cross. Not very many hours thereafter, came Easter morning.

But the joy was in the act itself, not only at the far end of the course He chose. How young were you and I when we were first impressed with the strange joy a mother takes

in giving herself in suffering for a child? It is love's way, to desire to give.

Jesus was not caught in a trap set by His enemies. Nor, if we may say so reverently, was He caught in a trap set by God, as some discredited past theologies might appear to imply. His primary consideration at that hour, as during every hour, was: "How may I make the most of this moment by turning it to the glory of God in the highest service of mankind?" And the hint of His answer is in the phrase: "And to give His life a ransom for many." The value of our human faculties consists in our capacity to use them to the benefit of others. It is in our power to be opening doors for other people, doors which now block them, but which may, when opened, admit them into all the richer and eternal meanings of human experience.

PRAYER

O Christ of Gethsemane, we thank Thee for the light that comes out of Thy darkest hours. Redeem us to Thyself, whose sorrow is our glory, whose victory is our strength. May we be so caught up by Thy courageous love that we shall willingly accept the cross of duty for the privilege of following Thee. May we, led by Thy example, labor in Thy strength and inherit Thy joy, O Captain of our salvation.



Saturday

THE FORETASTE OF VICTORY

READING: St. John 16:20 to end

BECAUSE WE HUMAN BEINGS ARE CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF God we are essentially creative by nature. The one circumstance which we are least fitted to endure is the consciousness of futility, the feeling that our striving is worth nothing. That is why the modern world, despite its unprecedented equipment for pleasure and comfort, has manifested so tragic a famine hunger after joy. Many who marched to the vermin-ridden hell of the trenches found relief, with Rupert Brooke, that at last life had revealed a significant content:

Blow, bugles, blow! They brought us, for our dearth,
Holiness, lacked so long, and Love, and pain.
Honour has come back, as a king, to earth,
And paid his subjects with a royal wage;
And Nobleness walks in our ways again;
And we have come into our heritage.

Our Lord was feeling His way to the conclusion that should be all-fulfilling. He found the way to complete the arch of His wondrously creative life. Through that decision, He was lifted up to the greatest moment of human history. At the Cross uniquely He draws mankind unto Himself; He carries to its climax His mission.

At Gethsemane the task was to hold Himself in control, to discern and to accept the course of His destiny. The conscious goal is reflected in the words of St. John's Gospel: "I have power to lay My life down, and I have power

to take it again." That, in its essence, is the completeness of mastery to which we ourselves may aspire. We have a profusion of good ideas and ideals; we trade in good intentions. The Christians of our country lavish a flood of emotion upon their Lord year by year. But to bring our wandering impulses and our currents of desire under such control that we can feel: "I have power to lay my life down, and power to take it again," is beyond us. That power will not come easily. It is won at great cost because it is worth much. Only at a great price will we gain this freedom.

Let us note again the human aloneness of Mary's Son in the Garden, for even His closest friends were asleep and seemed not at all to comprehend. So must we go alone, and must overcome our reluctance and fear of being long alone with God.

"He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast"—so near, and yet so far. Again we read: "And He went a little further." That was just like Him. The whole impact of His influence upon human nature is to prompt us to go a little further than it would ever have occurred to us to go.

He could hardly stand the agony of the ordeal. There is a fearful intensity about that scene in a garden. Three times the chief actor returns for the solace of His friends' companionship. The grueling test is not quickly overpassed. We read that sweat, as it were great drops of blood, was falling from Him. The prayer is thrice reiterated: "O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me except I drink it, Thy will be done." And this represents increasing acceptance of the earlier prayer: "Nevertheless, not My will but Thine be done," the eternal prayer that is the kernel of all prayer, and which must rule all our petitions.

We read that at this juncture "there appeared unto Him an angel from heaven, strengthening Him." The intense go

through ordeals which others know not of. To be willing to face a valley of decision is to realize that our trouble must grow graver before it can be better. Those who cling to the effort to lay hold upon God in prayer alone know how exacting a course they follow, how strongly the will must battle the wandering of attention and exclude the plausible reasons for turning to other pleasurable occupations. But at the far side comes the heavenly sense of affinity with invisible forces, angels from heaven, the discerning that one is *not* alone; the assurance, by a strange sense of spiritual rightness of being, that God has not been deaf to our plea, unmindful of our struggle. And the real reward is the consciousness of loyalty to the eternal mission of redemption, in which it is our supremest privilege to play a part, however slight.

These are but the beginnings of the illuminations we receive as we meditate upon the scene of Gethsemane. The deeper part, perhaps, cannot be put into words. In the Cathedral at Exeter, in England, an anonymous artist, a soldier in the Great War, has done, as a memorial to his fallen comrades, a picture entitled "Gethsemane." Its background, as I recall it over the years, shows the garden in colors of somewhat the same magic darkness of rock, woodland, and fern as is Leonardo's background in "The Virgin of the Rocks." Christ, as depicted on the canvas, is obviously under terrific strain. There is a questioning look as He seeks for the hint of His answer. The portrait, instinct with a dramatic recognition of the momentous significance of the scene, is chiefly remarkable in that it conveys not one, but several impressions. Despite the strain, the sorrow, the uncertainty, or shining through them, there is a foretaste of victory. It seems the very eve of the moment when He returned to awaken those "sleeping for sorrow," with His, "Rise, let us be going!"

"Sleeping for sorrow"—unwilling to become spiritually

awake or morally sensitive and alert—such is the state of being of many who in this bewildered epoch have lost the sense of God as victorious Love that will never let the world go. “Sleeping for sorrow” were His friends, because they wist not that by waking they might witness and participate in the victory that was destined to burst upon their world on Easter morning.

The forces of darkness sleep not upon the earth. Those who are bent on acquisition and aggrandizement sleep not. They press forward for their gains by night and by day. Even now are being built armies of the air to visit death and destruction upon defenseless populations that stand in the way of nationalist ambition. Yet in the Christ-spirit of reconciliation we may wield a power superior to the power of their darkness. We who are claimed for the constructive and redemptive purposes of Christ cannot afford to be stultified, drugged, sleeping for sorrow. Rather, we must revitalize all our energies and stamina by meeting the opportunities of the time with the spirit of victory in our hearts.

PRAYER

O Redeeming Christ, who hast promised that we can overcome inner discord and outward disaster by living the immortal life in the midst of mortality, grant us Thy grace that we may find in Thee and in our own souls that which will enable us both to endure and to triumph over anything that life or death can bring to us, through Thy mercy and mediation.



FOURTH WEEK

REDEEMER THROUGH COMPASSION

Monday

COMFORTABLE WORDS

Hear what comfortable words our Saviour Christ saith unto all who truly turn to Him.—The Communion Office.

WE ARE TO MEDITATE THIS WEEK UPON THE COMFORT OF His Redeeming Words. What is the weight of a word? Let us recall some of the sayings of our Lord: "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word shall not pass away." "Therefore, whosoever heareth these *sayings* of Mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock." So a word can redeem, against rain and flood and wind. Let them that wondered at the weight of His words say so. "And all bare Him witness, and wondered at the *gracious* words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?" They could not believe that a carpenter could fashion such words! Let a man redeemed—but not now—say so. "Then Simon Peter answered Him,

Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." His every word is a redeeming power!

Let us meditate upon this Preface to the Comfortable Words. "Hear what comfortable words our Saviour Christ saith unto all who truly turn to Him." There is a word in this saying that hath weight also. It is the word "truly." Let us take that word "truly" into our hands and weigh it. We need have no fear that the world will not turn to Jesus Christ. It will do so as inevitably as the morning looks down upon our earth when it has turned its face up into the light of the sun. He cannot be hid, for men will seek Him out, to look at Him. The infidel on the soap-box in the park may harangue his hearers, saying that He is a "myth"; but a simple man on the edge of the crowd will ask, pertinently, "Then why can't you let Him alone?" The world cannot let Him alone. He is like the eyes of a certain portrait upon the wall. Hang that portrait anywhere you will, and the eyes will follow you, wherever you move.

Let us think of Him on that one day which men have called His "triumphant" entry into the city. Let us listen to the Pharisees shouting through their angry beards: "Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after Him." It seemed that the world was turning to Him that day. Doubtless some did turn, and truly turn. But not all; not the crowd. They turned that day, but not truly. "They waved that day palms that were shaped like spears," as Hugh Benson said, "but in five days they were waving spears that were shaped like palms!" The fickle crowd! But we cannot indict a crowd, any more than we can indict a nation. How of the individuals? How of ourselves? We hear this word about *truly* turning to Him whenever we receive Holy Communion. We hear it after we have turned, to go to Him, to kneel to Him, to put our hands between His hands, "though we cannot see Him, and perhaps dare not." We take from Him the Bread of Heaven and the

Chalice of His Divine Love. But do we *truly* turn? Will the morrow bear witness of the turning of yesterday?

Let us think of some who did truly turn. That woman whose trembling fingers touched his garment's hem. It was in a crowd. "Master, the multitude throng Thee, and press Thee; and sayest Thou, who touched me?" "Nay; some-one has *truly* touched me!" That Centurion, an alien from Israel; he knew the weight of Jesus' word, when one really turns: "Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." That Syro-Phœnician woman in the road, clinging to the conviction that He would give, even to a "dog," a crumb. He did. That woman out of whom He cast "seven devils," meaning that she had been a perfect slave to her passions, she *truly* turned; and the turning led to an Easter Dawn, redeemed—with Him! Simon Peter *truly* turned; turned in bitter tears across the firelight; turned again in that threefold vow of love on the Tiberian shore. Saul of Tarsus turned. He must have begun *truly* to turn that day when they laid their impeding clothes at his feet, that they might the better stone Stephen; and at Damascus he *so truly* turned that the answering Light blinded him!

Let us see how untrue turning may deceive. "There came one *running*." We call him the Rich Young Ruler. He has indeed turned, we say. Why, the man cannot wait to walk! "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Then has he *truly* turned? Our Lord does not think so, not yet. "Why callest thou me good?" It is not enough to call Him "Good Master." How about the commandments? The youth says that he has kept them all. Was ever a man able to claim so much? He is believed; and yet it is not enough. "One thing thou lackest." As Robert Browning said: "Oh, the little more, and how much it is! The little less, and what worlds away!" The youth could turn; but he could not turn his *possessions*. And so he himself turned away sorrowful. We have seen him in Hoffman's pic-

ture. We have seen his jaunty cloak and his floating plume. But there is a truer picture of him, painted by George Frederick Watts. Almost, in that picture, you look for him in vain. You see the sorrowful Christ, but you must look long for the Young Man—just his back you see, on the vanishing road. One said to Mr. Watts: "That is not a picture of the Rich Young Ruler. All you can see of him is his back!" The artist replied: "That is all there is of the Rich Young Ruler; just his back." The Evangelists confirm it. He turned dramatically, but he did not turn *truly*. And then he turned his back.

We know Matthew Arnold's poor butterfly:

Her life was turning, turning, in mazes of heat and sound.
But for peace her soul was yearning, and now peace laps her round.
Her cabined, ample spirit, it fluttered and faltered for breath.
Tonight she doth inherit the Vasty Halls of Death.

Is that all that can be promised to Poor Butterfly, to her who was always "turning, turning, in mazes of heat and sound"? Well do we know those mazes of heat and sound. No age ever had more of them than our own. Only "the Vasty Halls of *Death*"? Hear what was said to a poor thief who truly turned to Him: "Today thou shalt be with Me in *Paradise*."

PRAYER

O Father of Lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow cast by turning, we know that our necessity is to find ourselves, before we can find the Light. May we so truly turn to that Light that lighteth every man, that we may be folded in His redeeming comfort, as harbors fold the ships. For in His Word is our trust.



Tuesday

REFRESHMENT

Come unto me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.—St. Matthew 11:28.

LET US MEDITATE ABOUT THIS WORD, ADDRESSED TO THE weary in body and mind and soul. Once Walter Pater meditated upon it, in a conversation with a distinguished literary woman, an agnostic. "I believe in Jesus Christ," said Pater, "because of His miracles." "Do you believe," asked his companion, "that Jesus made water into wine, walked on the sea, multiplied loaves and fishes?" "I suppose I do," replied Pater; "but I was thinking of His greatest miracle." "And what was that, pray?" After a moment's silence, Pater answered the agnostic's question. "Oh, that He said, 'Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.' Millions have gone to Him and have found that rest. That is His greatest miracle."

Let us remember how our Lord speaks this Word to aching human muscles. He was Himself a workingman. There must be strength in a yoke, to match the ox's strength. Wood must be hard, and the muscles that hold a tool against its stubborn grain must grow tired. He must have been weary and heavy laden a thousand times!

Yet He must have had joy in His work. How He speaks of the yoke that will be easy to the neck of the beast! When those "dumb terrors" whom our machine age has made human cogs "reply to God, after the silence of the centuries," they will have this to say, *that we smothered their souls in heavy stuff!* Jesus would have us make men's bur-

dens light, light by joy of the working. Doubtless the first machine ever made in this world was a simple wheel. "Tubal hath made me a wheel." But when that simple wheel was made, two little devils instantly hopped upon it. One said, "I am Friction; and if you keep on running, I will wear you out." The other said, "I am Rust, and if you stop running, I will eat you up!" From that day to this, the problem of the wheel has been the problem of lubrication. "He was anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows," because that saving oil was "the joy of the working"? Men have found it. The craftsmen of the Middle Ages found it. They spoiled many a good piece of metal; they dulled the edge of many a tool; but their souls were in their work. When they showed it to the Master Craftsman, they said: "Behold my *experience*!" Their souls were in it; their love; their religion. The great violinmaker said: "God could not make Antonio's violin without Antonio!" And God said to the celestial choir, "Hush, I pray you. I have just heard one of my children say something." An old tool-maker in Pratt Institute had just finished a two-part tool when the "class" came to his lathe. One of the class, not able to see with naked eye where the two parts joined, asked: "How closely do they fit?" The old man said: "I do not know. I have no instrument fine enough to measure it." "Do they need to fit so closely?" The workman said no. "Then why do you do it?" The old man just looked at him. We shall solve no problem of human labor until we lift greed's smothering grasp from the souls of working-people. Always, Jesus speaks this redeeming Word: "Come unto me. Learn of me."

We say: "I had rather wear out than rust out." But why must it be either? Our Lord said: "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" He refused to be hurried. In a noble gesture we shorten the hours, and continue to shear away the soul. Our Lord said, when they told Him that Herod

would hurry Him beyond His work to death, "Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected." He refused to let the tyranny either of Time or of Time-servers put jagged teeth into the Eternal. Walter Pater was right. It can be His greatest miracle.

Let us recall how our Lord speaks this redeeming Word to the tired of mind. To the fearful He says: "Fear not; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom." To the doubting He gives "the will to believe." He cures the mind gone astray in Gadara's graveyard. Why is there so much cynicism in our time? Some of it is ill-intended; some is unconsidered babbling of an insulated and insincere intelligentsia; but for the most part, cynicism is a tired mind talking. Yet cynicism is a deadly thing! One does not fear that sextillions of infidels will destroy the Church. One fears the cynicism in the supposedly faithful which questions every movement in the Church's life! And sometimes these opinions come from men whom Christ has ordained. Is there a more terrible sentence in all history than that of Cicero? He speaks of the last insult to God. He says that the very "augurs of religion came at length to grin at one another across the sacrifices!" What of the "out-worn Creeds"? What of Mission? Was there ever a Great Commission? and if so, to what does it commit or commission us? What of the enthusiasm of the Young Communists? Match that, if you can, with the enthusiasm of young Christians!

Brethren, let us bring our weary minds, bogged on the détours of deceptive thinking, back to the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Let this mind be in us that was also in Christ Jesus.

PRAYER

O God, Who worketh hitherto, and Whose blessed Son worketh; who hath fashioned for Thy children a rest, as

Thou hast fashioned for them a work; may we find not only refreshment in the periodic cessation from labor, but also that better thing: the refreshment that comes from joy in our labor. And, finding this for ourselves, may we seek to secure it for all other men and women. Through Jesus, Christ our Lord.



Wednesday

EVERLASTING LIFE

So God loved the world, that He gave his only-begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.—St. John 3:16.

SURELY, IF WE TOOK A VOTE OF ALL CHRISTIANS HAVING the franchise, this scriptural passage would be elected the most precious. It is precious; but it has been, and is, the hardest to believe. The Old Testament is, in some respects, the saddest, the most wistful, the loneliest of books. When the sun was scarce risen upon the earth, man and woman hid themselves from the Great Lover. Looking up at the stars, Israel's poet, with the awe of the astronomer, cried, "What is man?" So, centuries afterwards, Carlyle said of the same starlit heaven, "O mon, it is a sair sicht!" So the Breton fisherman, whose faith is perhaps the most simple and sincere of any among men, exclaims, as his fathers had before him, "O God, thine ocean is so wide, and my boat is so small."

That Love creates; that Love must pervade all which it creates; that only hate can destroy—these things even babes and sucklings instinctively comprehend. When Maude Royden asked the pupils of a school, engaged in making paper gifts for their mothers, whom their mothers would question, should these prized things be destroyed, every little girl answered, "She would not question me!" No; those mothers would question everybody else in the house; but they would not question the love that had created. We have "queer pains of thought," of vastness, of immensity, of the

quantitative evaluation of all things. "Bigness" is the beam that gets in our eye.

It is inevitable that the Universe, unbelievably magnified as it is, should appall the faith of one imprisoned on this mote of dust. A man left his city, climbed Mount Wilson, and asked the astronomer to show him Betelgeuse. He looked at that burning blur through the lens, blinked when the astronomer told him by what celestial diameters he looked and, when he returned to his city, found that its recessed towers of steel and stone, its roaring traffic, its swift human rivers, had somehow lost their urgency. What chance had a man six foot tall? If he were a million miles tall? But even that would be nothing! If he were a hundred million miles tall? Nothing. If he were so tall that Betelgeuse singed his hair! then, thought he, listening Love—if Love does listen—might hear him.

A collegian tells how he stood one day, a lad of sixteen, with his teacher before the spectroscope. A beam from Sirius, the dogstar, was falling upon the instrument. The teacher told him that Sirius was a trillion miles away; that the beam of starlight had been journeying 186,000 miles a second for sixteen years! Well met, these two, boy and beam. The boy had been journeying also for sixteen years, out of the mystery that lies the other side of birth. Now these sixteen-year-olds trysted in the laboratory. How fared the boy? He had thrust his hand into the secret of Sirius. He could tell you exactly what mineral gasses were incandescent in that molten retort a trillion miles away. But certainly the beam knew nothing of the boy. It knew him no more than "the locomotive knows the love-letter in the mail car." The boy did know that the star beam carried a love letter. It may be that, having only one Son, Him "only-begotten," the Writer had no Lover to send to Sirius or Betelgeuse. But they will not miss the Mes-

senger, nor have need of Him, for no one dwells in those flaming worlds, to love or pray or laugh. They are but semaphores upon the road of night to keep the mail on time. The Letter says: "So God loved the world, that he gave His only-begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Must we believe that the Great Lover is so busy—busy as a train dispatcher—that He cannot hear the whisper of our prayer? Many think so, and do not pray.

But, enough of celestial excursions. We know the world as a world of mankind. Does God so love that world that He gave His only-begotten to die, for every least one within it? A little poem says:

How odd of God
To choose the Jews!

Yet He did choose them; that out of their crumbling generations our Holy Religion should be given to us.

How odd of God to choose the Negro! Yet sometimes He has chosen him. "The Green Pastures" is an instance. It is not invidious to say that neither Roark Bradford nor Marc Connelly made "The Green Pastures." Every word came from a Negro soul! A woman said: "I do not object to that play's anthropomorphism; I object to God being a negro." But that woman was illogical and most anthropomorphic. God is not limited to race. When a Nordic shall produce a "Green Pastures," all good men will welcome a white God!

How odd of God to choose Kagawa, to send him to the slums of Kobe. How odd of God to choose Gandhi. How odd of God to choose an Englishman, a Chinese, a Slav. But God so loves the world—all of it, every pigment of its skin, every strange tongue that mothers teach the babies of the world. Brethren, we must not hate whom God loves. We

remember Father Tabb's poem of the little boy whose ball had gotten "Out of Bounds":

A Little Boy of Heavenly birth,
But far afield today,
Comes down to find His ball—the Earth,
Which sin hath cast away.
Oh, brothers, let us one and all
Pitch in, and get Him back His ball!

PRAYER

Thou Creating Love, who didst care so much for our world that Thou didst send Thine only-begotten Son to redeem it; set, we beseech thee, not the world, but thy love of it, in our hearts; that the world may never be so much with us that we despair of Thy compassion, or ever lose its own. Through Jesus, Christ our Redeemer.



Thursday

SALVATION

Hear also what Saint Paul saith. This is a true saying, and worthy of all men to be received, That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.—I Timothy 1:15.

IT IS A "GREAT SINNER" SELF-CONFESSED, A SINNER REDEEMED, who speaks this word of the Redeeming Sin-bearer. With Saint Paul, sin is no theorizing. There is a long, agonizing cry in almost everything he wrote; and he wrote much. It has been difficult for the world to take Saint Paul at his own word. It was his custom to begin his letters in salutation to his readers as "saints." But whether he dictated, or, because of his weak eyes, inscribed grotesque characters that "ran uphill," he must have winced when he wrote "To the saints that be in —."

"Saints," did I say?, with your remembered faces,
Dear men and women, whom I sought and slew!
Ah, when we mingle in the heavenly places,
How shall I weep to Stephen, and to you!

This man talked of "a thorn in the flesh." It was a vivid word. There is a troubling thorn. The true flesh is pierced thereby, and the pain is sharp. The wound festers, and is for a time forgotten. Then the injured member hits against some circumstance, and the twinge is felt. Saint Paul prayed for grace to heal the thorn. It is too bad that all sinners do not remember the thorn. It is said that men cross the continent, go to Battle Creek, or to Rochester, to get a little life restored to a dead wrist. We are so careful of the physical! Saint Paul took his spiritual thorn to the Healer.

The scars remained; but they were transformed into the marks of the Lord Jesus. We may trust Paul's testimony to the Redeeming Christ—that He came into the world to save sinners.

Our Lord redeemed sinners; it was hard for Him to redeem the "good." By Society's valuation, the Pharisees were "good." Yet the Redeeming Christ almost despaired of them. He thought the harlots and publicans would have a better chance. He knew that it was the "good" who were making His Cross! There was a last necessity, indeed, when Roman treason-mongers became the spearheads of the Shame that our Lord despised. But it was really the "good" who compassed the deed on Golgotha, as it is the "good" who crucify Him afresh today!

Let us meditate on how the redeeming Cross was made. It was made by many hands, over a long period, before it was assembled in Holy Week. Part of it was made one night after supper, in the house of Simon the Pharisee. Here was a "good" man. Make no mistake, the woman of the street who crept in and passionately kissed the Guest's feet, never crossed that threshold by Simon's invitation. She and her kind would have solicited Simon's eyes in vain. He was properly scandalized, and his look toward his Guest said it plainly. "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee." And the closed mind of the "good" man, said "Master, say on." The Master did say on . . . "wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven the same loveth little." Simon himself confirmed that statement. "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" The incident closed, the woman departed; the Guest went out also, to pray in the hills. But Simon went into a room behind his supper-room. He had lowered his head to that rebuke across the table; but neither in penitence nor in shame. He had lowered his head, as the angry bull lowers his when the picador pricks

him. He had an anvil, and he began to shape long nails. "I will have these ready," he said, "against the time."

The upright of the Cross was cut in the wood at the edge of the town. They slunk away when He said that one ought to be sinless to stone an adulterous woman. They were so angry that soon they found themselves in the outskirt forest. They would have a look at the trees. "That is a good one; let us take that."

The transverse beam, whereto His hands would be nailed, was furnished again by "good" men, "well-meaning" men. The house was full; the doors and windows were glutted. The great Rabbi was speaking! No chance for another to get in, let alone a man on a stretcher. The roof was the only chance. They broke it, and let the man down at the feet of Jesus. "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee!" "What was that? What blasphemy is here!" "Very well: take up thy bed and walk." It is hard to see sins leaving a man at the merciful, redeeming Word; but one can easily see a paralytic carrying a bed. And seeing it, the unmerciful shrunk back! There was plenty of room for the man carrying a bed. But someone had to repair the roof. These "good" men would do that, and, incidentally, repair their outraged orthodoxy. They could use that longer piece. They would like to see Him walk away with the bed that they would make for Him!

To do the things He did, to dare the taunt: "Look! Look! He goes to eat with publicans and sinners!"; to face the danger—a very real one—of having people say that one is taking away from the prophecies of this Book—that one is making the Redeeming Word too easy a thing—this involves no idle danger. The Everlasting Mercy is hard to practice. Try it! Try it, and a "righteous" Society will seek to crucify you today, as it crucified Him. Society will not do it on two beams of wood. But it will hang you up as high as heaven, and it will do it because your Christianity climbs

between theirs and Heaven. If this meditation has been more contentious than comforting, forgive. Hear again what Saint Paul saith, *This is a true saying, and worthy of all men to be received, That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.*

PRAYER

Thou Merciful God, how shall we escape Thee, pursuing Hound of Heaven! In the far country of our disobedience Thy footfall halts by us; we hear a knock, and it is Thy nail-pierced hand. Again, our boat flounders in the seas of selfishness, and the Wounded Pilot takes command. We bolt and bar doors and windows. Then comest Thou and standest in the midst. If we perish, it will be in spite of Thee. It is not Thy will that even a little one shall perish. Save us, O God.



Friday

THE ADVOCATE

Hear also what Saint John saith. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins."—I John 2:1-2.

WE HAVE AN ADVOCATE. AN ADVOCATE IS A LAWYER. WE have a Lawyer. This Lawyer is not a prosecuting attorney. Many have represented Him as that; but they are mistaken. He is a Lawyer for the defense! This is in His credentials: "For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved."

We shall look upon some of this Lawyer's cases; but let us see, first, what a lawyer does before he takes a case. He closets himself with his client. He says, "I must have all the story, all the facts. If you are innocent, I want to know it. If you are guilty, I want to know that. If I am to make an intelligent defense of you, you must tell me everything."

This is precisely what this Lawyer did. He closeted Himself with our humanity. "He was made man." In truth it is said of Him that He knew what was in man. He came to know all of man's story—the glory of it, the shame of it. In the preparation of His case He entered into man's temptations, in all points. He took His clients unto Himself and shut the door.

It would seem that what we call the Incarnation was as much a necessity to God as it is a boon to us. The author of a theological book posed the question, "Is God limited?"

The answer is yes. God is limited by the nature of His own Being. In "everyman's" theology God is a Pure Spirit "without body, parts, or passions." But what had a God "without body, parts, or passions" to do with the case of Jean Valjean? Suppose that Jean Valjean had stolen the loaf of bread before this Lawyer, human as himself, came down His secret stairs into the dock. Jean Valjean could have made his defense. "One I loved was hungry." Would not a Pure Spirit, "without body, parts, or passions"—without a stomach—would He not have had to ask: "Hungry? What do you mean by hungry?" When the Lawyer came, it was another matter.

When Mary the mother felt faint hands
 Beat at her bosom with life's demands,
 And naught to her were the kneeling kings,
 The serving star and the half-seen wings:—
 Then did the hurt ones cease to moan,
 And the long supplanted came to their own.

Yes, this Lawyer, hungry at His mother's breast; hungry as He plucks the growing corn—this Lawyer for the Defense could make a defense for Jean Valjean. Take the Prodigal Son. This man outraged Society. He was a waster. He was at last in the swine wash. Who will take his case? "I will," says our Lawyer. It was a great defense! In that defense Grace made its way against the Law, and mercy rejoiced against judgment.

There was the case of "The Woman vs. Sychar." This woman met the Lawyer at a well. She was a woman of known evil character. Yet Jesus took her case. The Lawyer began to probe her story. She tried to evade. She argued their political differences; she questioned the depth of the well; she even tried to get the Lawyer into a theological argument as to whether a Samaritan mountain or a Jerusalem temple was the more fit place to worship God. But the Lawyer would not let her go—for her own sake. "Go

call thy husband!" "I have no husband." "You are right," the Lawyer said, "for you have had five." But He took her case. We see her running back to the village. All her shame is gone now. All her fear of the Samaritan sisters' tongues has fallen away. "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did." She got the cart before the horse, of course. *It was she who told Him*; but her confusion was natural; there were tears in her eyes.

What cases this Lawyer took! There was the woman being dragged in the street. It was a difficult case. The law was plain and the evidence undoubted, and the penalty prescribed. Yet He got her off. There was Simon Peter, with no time to talk over the firelight. Time to talk there was at length, that post-Easter on the shore of Tiberias. Three times the Lawyer asked a question; "Lovest thou me?" He would have taken the case of Judas, if Judas had let Him. And there was His greatest case: Death vs. Life.

Let us meditate this strange fact, that the Lawyer is also the Judge. I say strange, because that could not happen in any commonwealth in the world. The Lawyer for the Defense and the Judge cannot be one and the same. But it is so in God's Commonwealth. The Creed affirms it. *Te Deum* affirms it. The Scriptures guard it as they guard the fact of His virgin birth, or the fact of His resurrection.

Long ago, when the Salvation Army was suspect in England, there was a trial of an Army worker in Manchester. She was a young woman, charged with obstructing traffic on the High Street. The magistrate asked her if she were guilty. She could not see a friend in the court. With tears running down her face, she said: "Your Worship, I was obstructing traffic, but it was upon the broad way that leadeth to destruction!" The magistrate left the bench, stepped down into the dock, and stood by her side till the trial was over. That will happen in the Judgment. There

will be a Judgment: let no man presume. But Christ will be the Judge: let no man despair!

PRAYER

God of our life and Light of all our seeing, we plead guilty. We have sinned against the Law, in thought and word and deed. But we have an Advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous. If righteousness were to come through the Law, then were we indeed in our sins; but then were this Advocate dead. We know that He ever liveth to make intercession for us, and that He shall come to be our Judge. Plead for us, O Divine Redeemer.

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Saturday

THE LIFTED HEART

Lift up your hearts. We lift them up unto the Lord.

—The Communion Service

LET US MEDITATE TODAY ON HOW OUR LORD REDEEMS THE lifted heart. The anatomist amazes us when he tells us how many thousands of tons our physical hearts lift in driving the blood through our bodies, in the course of our natural lives. But what is this phenomenon in physiology, compared with the spiritual phenomenon of the lifted heart? It is so universal that even the Egyptians had their *sursum corda*. "Thou shalt not consume thine heart!" But the Christian version is better, better because it gives us One to whom the heart is to be lifted, far better because it promises that God stoops to help us with the lifting. "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart!"

Let us meditate on how it is the *mind* most often that weighs down the heart, until it is too heavy to be lifted. "All of Shelley's physical remains that they saved from the pyre was his heart." It was too heavy for the flames! It was Shelley's heart that lifted his Skylark until in "heaven, or near it" it poured its full song. Shelley could lift the bird, but he could not lift his own heavy heart. His own mind weighted it down. And the mischief is that there are hearts that beat with arresting rhythm, even from the midst of the earth and the earthy; there are minds so captivating as to seduce the very elect, if that were possible. In his book, *The Fool Hath Said*, Beverly Nichols tells us how he was confirmed by the Bishop of Salisbury when he was a lad at

Marlborough; of how beautiful was his faith. Then he became thrall to Shelley, mounting up with the "blithe spirit" of the Skylark. When he opened the pages of Shelley's *Notes to Queen Mab*, he read there how impossible it is to believe in God, or that He "begat a son upon the body of a Jewish woman," or in prayer. "The works of God's fingers," wrote Shelley, "have borne witness against Him." Says Beverly Nichols: "It was as though Shelley, who had enchanted me with his gay singing, had suddenly burst into an obscene cackle of laughter. On and on went the laughter, echoing in my brain, chasing away the skylark from his own heaven, sending his aerie spirits affrighted, making a mockery of his 'music when sweet voices die,' blasting with its bitter breath the flowers he had laid on the tomb of Adonais. Shelley, who had created a universe of beauty for me, suddenly destroyed it with a clap of his hands."¹

Brethren, does this excursion into a recent book interrupt the thread of our meditation? But it is a needed warning. We shall meet a thousand voices in modern literature, not indeed with Shelley's magic of words, but using the same snare of the mind to imprison the heart. We assume that those who read this volume during Lent, also read many other pages. They read, perhaps, *The Outline of History*, or *The Story of Mankind*. Is it invidious to say that, after having read such books, you need to lift your eyes and your heart to Jesus Christ, "to know that He ever lived, to know that He ever died?" Mr. Wells and Mr. Van Loon are not evangelists. Yet there was once a Man named Jesus, called the Christ; there is such a known Factor in History as Christianity. Dean Sperry, in a magazine article, pointed out that we have a "new asceticism." Whereas we once tortured our bodies, we now pamper them but torture our minds.

¹ Beverly Nichols: *The Fool Hath Said*. New York, Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., pp. 11, 12.

Is it not so? How much of our literature today is a literature of despair! At least, the worst asceticism of yesterday lifted a man to a pillar in the desert. We think it was not far enough for him to have been lifted; but it was at least a little way. The modern torture of the mind leaves us still in that "darkling plain where ignorant armies clash by night."

The gift that we bring to the Altar is the gift of the lifted heart. Our Lord said: "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." The unreconciled heart is too heavy to be lifted up. Mostly, we do not need to rise from our kneeling to find an unreconciled brother. When Robert Louis Stevenson talked of the "little brother" with whom he was unreconciled; when Barrie talked to the students at St. Andrew's of "McConnachie"; when Gordon wrote to his sister that he had been sore put to "in hewing Agag to pieces"—we know what they meant. They were at variance with themselves! For this deliverance from ourselves, for this reconciliation with "a voice as bad as conscience," we need forgiveness, and, above all, we need to *believe* in forgiveness. A great Russian has said that to doubt forgiveness is to doubt God Himself. And this is so, from the very Nature of God. But to believe that we are forgiven is often hard indeed. Shall not Christian Grace match at least the Egyptian guess at Divine Mercy? "Thou shalt not consume thy heart."

But there is a brother, *other* than myself, whom I have wronged. My sin has hurt another. "Where is the soul that I have wronged?" asked Phillips Brooks. "He is somewhere in the great mass of humanity, duplicating, and reduplicating, it may be, the evil I taught him in word or deed." How shall we find that brother and be reconciled to him? Find him we must, though he be on the other side of the world.

Only so can we lift up the heart to peace. And if he be lost to us, there is One at the Altar who is the seeker of the lost. If He has put the impulse of reconciliation into my heart, may He not put the impulse to be reconciled into the heart of my brother, though that brother be indeed across the world, or across the vale of Death? Judas hurried to the Sanhedrin, that he might be reconciled to them, that he might throw down the money on the pavement. It did not do any good. If only Judas had lifted his heavy heart to the Christ! If only he had not despaired!

PRAYER

Eternal Father, who hath so ordered Thy universe that everything in it, from anthill to archangel, is always lifting something; may we so lift our weary hearts to Thee that they may be lifted into everlasting peace. For Jesus the Christ, His sake.



FIFTH WEEK

REDEEMER THROUGH THE RISEN LIFE

Monday

PURSUIT OF THE RISEN LIFE

READING: Colossians 3:1-11

IF YE THEN BE RISEN WITH CHRIST, SEEK THOSE THINGS WHICH are above," said St. Paul to a group of people one day. Then he wrote it in a letter, to impress them further. The Risen Life is a continuing life. Those around us have a right to expect that we who call ourselves Christians shall be interested in "the things which are above"—the higher, the permanent interests of life. Just as assuredly God has a right to expect that, if we "be risen with Christ," He will find us constantly faithful to a Best, regularly drawing upon Him for the dependable resources of life without which no man can arrive at a Best.

First of all, let us test our sustained interest in the Continuing Life—how real it is to us. I know, in a general way, the value of insulin to a diabetic; but insulin does not really concern a person much until it becomes necessary to his own health. The same is true of radium, with its healing properties. It does not "register" unless I myself, or some one intimately related to me, has it prescribed as necessary

for healing the body. What does the fact of the Resurrection mean to the average person? Not very much until that person is faced with separation in the flesh from some one he very much loves, until he needs healing of the heart-hurt. Then he begins to wonder about the reality of what he has been taught in Church, of what he has sung about the battle being over and the victory won, of what he has said in Creeds when he declared, most emphatically, "I believe in the Resurrection of the dead." Such experiences may, perhaps, arouse an immediate interest; but that interest is not always sustained. One thing we must learn about the Christian Life is that to build it up and to enjoy it there must be a *sustained* interest, even if that requires of us a sustained sacrifice. Not taking that fact seriously is responsible for many people missing the happiness within reach in the Christian Life. One hears them complain, or explain, that they used to be interested in the Church but that now it does not mean much to them.

Some people find a Rule of Life, a daily program, necessary if their climb up to things above is to be sustained. The forward movements of the Church are built around a day-by-day rule in following the Christ. "Day by day"—turning, following, learning, serving, praying, worshiping, and sharing. We may not jump suddenly and all at once into the Christ-life, nor does it come accidentally. Eternal Life is a gift from God; but we have to be made ready to take it in.

It is not a very attractive witness we bear to a loving God when, though we accept the fact of the Risen Life, we allow ourselves to be cumbered with the low and the temporal and the unworthy. Let us not pretend that it is an easy matter to keep this sustained spiritual interest. There are people who seem quite easily to keep an interest sustained in other things. Men and women manage to keep their interest in horse races, in golf, in fishing, in bridge, in the collecting of stamps, in dogs, in work, in hunting. Some

people become possessed by hobbies; it is difficult for them to be interested in anything else. Nor should we seek to have anyone become hysterically zealous even over religion for, if the Christ-life stands for anything, it demands sanity and balance. It produces a poise which cannot come from any other source. Religion must be natural, not something added on; it must be a part of life. It is not easy to keep a sustained interest in that sane Continuing Life, but such a thing must be if we are to have health for the whole body.

St. Paul referred to some of his followers as not being ready for "strong meat": he said he would feed them with "milk, as babes in Christ." I do not know how much you who read these words can take, in the way of spiritual nutrition; but I propose that for today, and each day this week, we take at least one bit of food.

Our Lord told us, and many have found it to be true, that only in His way can we acquire for ourselves that which it takes to keep us up to a Best. He put Himself out of self, long enough for the whole life to come into control of His humanity—with the wisdom, the strength, the love and the courage necessary to meet life around Him. We too can be that self-emptying, if we will it to be; and God cannot get in to us in any other way. It requires practice and perseverance.

Begin today by turning your thoughts Godward. Sit for a few moments, quiet and alone, thinking in terms of God, even though you may not as yet know exactly what God is like. "If ye be risen with Christ, seek."

PRAYER

May Christ, the Son of God, who in the body of our mortality endured the reproach of the Cross, free us from the torment of every evil passion; and may He, who rose from the grave in the flesh of that same, our body, raise up our hearts in true holiness from every sinful fall.

—*From the Mozarabic Breviary*



Tuesday

THE RISK OF THE RISEN LIFE

READING: Ephesians 1:10-23

THERE IS SOME RESPONSIBILITY INVOLVED IN "BEING RISEN with Christ." Whether we are aware of it or not, the obligation is there, just the same. One day a Jewish rabbi challenged my faith in the Continuing Life. He said to me, "We Jews believe that the moral law is written in the heart of humankind and, while we recognize Moses as our leader, yet if it should be proved that Moses never lived, it would not in the least interfere with our religion. But it is not so with you Christians. Your religion is built around a person. If one took Jesus away, your religion would be gone. I wonder if you Christians realize the great risk you take in putting all your faith, all your hope, in one lone person." I was ready with a hasty answer. "Of course," I said, "we realize the risk; and that is the glory of our faith." But since then I have asked myself many times: "Do I really appreciate the risk I am taking—and am glad to take—in centering all my trust, all my hope, all my religion, my whole life in this one lone Person?" If we be risen *with Christ*, we have to take the responsibility, along with the joy.

Let us think about Him today in terms of what He is. The practical approach to Jesus, for the average individual, lies through His humanness. Some of the language of Scripture and some of the language of Creeds tends often to obscure Him from the lay mind. We lose Him sometimes, or some men do, in a theological maze. However, this much we know of Him humanly—that He was born in humble sur-

roundings, raised in an average Jewish home where faith in Jehovah was as natural as the food the family ate. He had a good education, if we are to judge by His conversations in the Temple. He had a most active ministry, not only of teaching, but of doing. He met discouragement and rebuff. He had many disappointments. He was absolutely fearless; threats against Him never prevailed. He was kind, sympathetic, loving toward all. He suffered embarrassment, humiliation, physical pain, death—those things which come to all of us, though never to any of us quite as they came to Him. His healing ministry showed that He possessed a complete knowledge of the natural laws of life. He was some one you could see and identify. When you study this human part of Him, you discover that what was written of Him, "He was tempted in all things like as we," is genuinely true; though it was, as we read also, "without sin." We see God incarnate in this human flesh. You and I are asked to put our faith in this one lone Being. It is He who says, "Come unto Me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden." We can understand, as we look at Him, what St. Paul said, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father." He knows how we feel, because He Himself has experienced it. Is it a risk to put one's trust in Him alone?

Because of this humanity in which God came to earth, we can see, in Him, besides all the things we ordinarily experience, also what the God in Him compelled that humanity to do. Take, for example, His attitude of mind toward the whole life. He was interested in any part of a man's life only for the sake of the whole man. He estimated all life, too, qualitatively. He did not, as we do, think in terms of quantity. We want to know how far, how much, how deep, how high, how big, how small. His was an entirely different approach. If faith was as small as a grain of mustard seed, that did not matter. The quantity did not enter into His thinking. At the feeding of the multitude, the quantity—or lack of it—disturbed the disciples. Jesus

said, "Give me what you have." "Have faith," said He, "and you can say to yonder mountain, Be moved; and it will move." If we be risen with Christ, we have to trust Him—qualitatively. What about the quality of our faith? Can it not be more real?

Jesus said, "Be childlike." "Except ye become as a little child, ye cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." St. Paul explained this saying for us when he spoke about putting away *childish things*. There was to be no putting away of the childlike *qualities*. Think of the child's simplicity; no race consciousness, no class consciousness, no self-consciousness. Childlikeness is simple and lovely. How nearly do we measure up to the child?

Then Jesus said, "Have life," all of it, not a piece of it; not just health, or wealth, or influence, or generosity, or congeniality. "I am come that you might have life, and have it in all its abundance"—in all its wholesomeness and joy. That is the Risen Life which is eternal. Death, it is true, takes away one medium through which we have expressed ourselves here, but God supplies another medium, for life has to go on. That is the foundation upon which the Christian Church was built. One puts one's trust in that Eternally Triumphant Person.

For today, select some one way in which, in your contacts with those around you, you can show the Christ that you are following Him in faith and childlikeness.

PRAYER

O God, Who, to redeem the ruin of the world, didst send Thy Son to take upon Him our flesh, we humbly beseech Thee that, as by His Resurrection Thou hast raised us from eternal death, so Thou wouldst preserve us from the snares of the enemy, that, abiding in His Holy Church, we may here be made partakers of that life which is Eternal, through the same Jesus, Christ our Lord.

—From the old Gallican Missal



Wednesday

PREPARATION FOR THE RISEN LIFE

READING: Isaiah 57:14-19

THE STRENGTH OF THE GAMBLING SPIRIT IN AMERICA—AND it is not confined to America—is evidence of the fact that people really do believe they can get something for nothing—though they seldom do. So it is in respect to things of the spirit. It is quite true that people wonder why religion does not do great things for them, when they have not exposed themselves in the least to its influence, or made any real investment of themselves. When St. Paul said, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above," by the use of the word *seek* He meant to remind us of a definite obligation, I must seek the things in life that count, if I am to be a Christian. I must be worthy and dependable, and not let life waste away while I fret and quibble and worry over the shallow, inconsequential, perishable things around me. Let us think today of some of the things involved in *seeking*, things we need to do if the Continuing Life is in us really to continue.

In the first place, there comes to us in life only that which we are prepared to receive. This is true even of disease; germs lodge where a man's system prepares the welcome. A hundred-dollar bill means nothing to a three-month-old child. A ten-year-old boy usually cannot appreciate the higher mathematics. Good citizenship does not come except to them that are prepared for it. What sort of preparation are we making today, that life may mean

more and that God may become more real tomorrow? When one compares the time and preparation he puts into other things with the time he gives to the Church or to spiritual culture, it is no wonder that religion does not seem more real. There is the often-told story of the man who always complained that the rector preached on the Resurrection when he went to church. The rector answered him that if he ever came to church on any other day except Easter, he might hear some other subject presented.

Listening devoutly to good and helpful sermons is a spiritual avenue open to us. We have not enough emphasized preaching in the modern Church. As a matter of fact, we have neglected it. The man who accepts partnership with Christ in being risen with Him, should use the listening to preaching, no matter how sorry it may be, as one of his opportunities to prepare himself for God. As for the clergy, of course they need to be careful that when they speak, they have something to say that will help.

There is also the Bible way of preparation. How familiar are we with our Bible: the religious story prior to the coming of the Christ; the story of His life and ministry and of our heritage? Parts of the Bible are difficult to read. (Life, too, is difficult to live at times; but we go on living it.) But there are available many guides and helps for us in our Bible reading. How diligent are we, who are risen with Christ, in using this avenue of preparation?

Then we have the preparation involved in private and family devotions. How much preparation is made in the home, privately or with the rest of the family, to make us ready for God? It has been said that family prayer is obsolete. We who are risen with Christ, having the obligation to seek the things which are above, are we honest in accepting our membership in His resurrected Body, the Church, if we neglect definite periods of prayer and quiet each day, or fail to provide some devotional period for the family?

It is more than probable that the current decay of family integrity and of the home can directly be traced to the disappearance of family altars. One knows, of course, the familiar excuses: lack of time, late sleepers, the press of business; and yet, if we be risen with Christ, does not that Christ have rights?

Of course, there are many other avenues of preparation. Think of a few which occur to you yourself. Only one more let us mention today—the most refreshing, the most important. Jesus definitely asks us to do one great thing in remembrance of Him. Our Lord placed the dining-table in the center of the Church's worship, because that is the place in the home where the family regularly gathers together. He took common food—bread, wine—blessed them and gave them to His disciples, and to us—His family, and said, "*Do this in remembrance of Me.*" There is a memorial of Him, a communion with Him, a eucharist or thanksgiving for Him. Day after day, week by week, we there know that He gave His life for us, asking only that we come "*in remembrance of Him*" and "*by faith take and eat and drink*" of that His abundant and resurrected Life. If we be risen with Christ, is there anything we ought to permit to keep us from Him there? He knows the secrets of all hearts. We can only receive that benefit which we are prepared to receive. In respect to the ways that He in Mother Church has provided for us—the avenues of preparation—can we afford to turn our backs upon Him and refuse His provision of Love?

If you can find a Celebration of the Lord's Supper today, this week-day, and, if not today, certainly before the week has gone, present yourself, your soul and body, there at His table, as a living sacrifice. Do it because you are risen with Christ and because He said, "*Do this in remembrance of me.*"

PRAYER

O God, whose blessed Son did manifest Himself to His disciples in the Breaking of Bread; open, we pray Thee, the eyes of our faith, that we may behold Thee in all Thy works; through the same Thy son Jesus, Christ our Lord.

—*Collect for Easter Monday*



Thursday

EFFORT TOWARD THE RISEN LIFE

READING: St. Matthew 7:13-21

I HAVE KNOWN PEOPLE WHO WERE WELL PREPARED FOR A vocation, but who failed ever to achieve success in terms of it. I have in mind a genius in chemistry who spent hours in laboratories and over textbooks, but was never quite willing to make the last push which would have put his theoretical knowledge into use. He was willing to experiment, but never completely to experience. So there are many people that miss achievement in terms of the Continuing Life. "If ye be risen with Christ, *seek*." The Christian life requires effort. (It requires effort to get anything worth while, even in this world. One hears stories of get-rich-quick schemes which are to bring ease and comfort to people; but wealth is not fruitful except in hands which have made an effort to obtain it.)

Let us remember the effort we make to acquire certain things in this life: an education, a job, social standing or credit, the securing of a family and a home. These do not come without hours, even years, of effort. To some these things never come, because of an unwillingness to expend the necessary effort. It is a well-known story that the man to whom humankind owes a debt of gratitude for his work with electricity, Thomas A. Edison, spent, on an average, only five hours a night in sleep. It was he who said, "Genius is 99 per cent work." The man who was chiefly responsible for the long-distance telephone, Pupin, writes in his autobiography a story of constant effort from the

time when he came to America, where he was abused and ridiculed, even until his death. The necessity of hard labor for success in any field is so apparent that it hardly needs to be mentioned. Yet that does not "register," somehow or other, when we think of a search for the Risen Life. We seem to expect *that* to come to us by chance or by accident. Nothing worth having comes that way.

How much effort do we give to preaching, to worship, and to the cultivation of the devotional life, as compared to the effort we expend on other interests? We even struggle to get through a difficult novel, merely because it is a "best seller," or perhaps we feel we must be able to talk about it; but we put the Bible down merely because we have difficulty in pronouncing the name of the King of Bashan. We read the newspapers diligently, to keep up with the news of the world that passes away; but it takes too much effort to read the Gospel, even to find out how we can share in life that does not pass away. People spend more effort on the daily mail, trying to decipher somebody's illegible writing, than they ever spend on St. John; and then they wonder why religion seems so inadequate, somehow.

Is not the same thing true about our church-going? When we get there, we profess our faith in God the Father Almighty, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, and in the Holy Ghost; but when we do not get there, what is it that has kept us away? If a man be, or desire to be, a good Christian, how can he stay away from church for trivial reasons? Behind absence from worship there is usually only an unwillingness to make the effort. If we have accepted membership in Christ's body, we have allied ourselves with the Family in Christ and are under *obligation* to share with that Family in worship of its living God. Whatever effort that takes, it is part of the obligation that we expend it. Honesty with ourselves about this matter would help a great deal.

It may be that the preaching in your church is not good or interesting, that the music is poor, that the service is not read well. It may be that, on a given Lord's Day, the weather is warm, or cold, or wet. It may be that you have to work six days a week and that Sunday is your only day of rest. It may be that you do not feel so very well. All those things may be true; but yet to offer any one, or all, of those excuses is, in reality, only to say to God: "Lord, I am not willing to make an effort to worship Thee, no, not even on this one day a week set aside by the Church for worship of Thee in Thy Resurrected glory." A little honesty *with God* about church-going would do us no harm.

Some people try to "chart" their day. They draw up a schedule: so many minutes for eating, so many hours for labor, so many for sleep, so much time for entertainment, education, recreation. A very good idea. How much time in your measured day for deliberate cultivation of the comradeship of the Lord? Let us make an honest effort to find time for prayer, for Bible-reading, for early Communion; time, too, for silence in which to wait and listen for His voice. You will not do it unless you plan to do it. You will not do it without real effort. Shall we give God less? "If we be risen with Christ" our eyes should be open to the joy and reality of the abundant life. He cannot give it unless we do our part.

PRAYER

Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we, who at every celebration of the Holy Mysteries do keep anew the solemnity of the Lord's Resurrection, may rise from the death of the soul, with Him who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, one God for ever and ever.

—From the Gregorian Sacramentary



Friday

THE WITNESS TO THE RISEN LIFE

READING: Isaiah 40:9-17

IF YE THEN BE RISEN WITH CHRIST, SEEK THOSE THINGS which are above." Why? What for? That we may share in the abundant life; that we may understand and appreciate its reality; that we may pass on to other people that which comes to us. We cannot hoard this Continuing Life. We must give it, or we cannot enjoy it ourselves. I am a medium through which the God-life passes—expressing itself in me and impressing itself through me on somebody else. The God-life must pass through us, and beyond us, if it is to do its work in us. Jesus laid upon us, therefore, an obligation to be witnesses before the world to what the power of God's Holy Spirit can do in and through such bits of sentient clay as we.

It is strange how inarticulate we are when it comes to telling what our religion means to us. If a man has a fine piece of business, if he has done or made something good in lesser realms of achievement, he is apt to be enthusiastic about it to the next man he meets. He does that even with a decent golf score. When we read a good book, we cannot resist telling others about it. When a woman discovers a new recipe, she is eager to pass the news on. So it is with things of minor moment; but when it comes to good news of the Risen Life, and its accomplishment within us, somehow or other we are strangely dumb of speech, and bashfully reticent.

Try to imagine yourself as having fabulous riches, but

with no one from whom to buy anything; or overflowing with love in your soul, and yet with no one about on whom to shower that love—not even a dog. Or can you think of yourself as filled with hate, and yet with no person in all the world to whom to utter that hate? Such as these is exactly the situation in which a man finds himself with his religion if he does not have an outlet, an objective, some person somewhere to whom he can proclaim his joy in the Continuing Life. We must give expression to the courage, faith, love, wisdom, and sympathy pouring into us from God, or else these evidences of the Spirit are stifled and wither and come neither to blossom nor fruit. “By their fruits you shall know them.” The Lord cursed the promising but barren tree. Not only is it impossible to take in the abundant life without preparing ourselves to receive it, without real effort to get it, without accepting the risk of it; but equally it may not become a “lively faith,” or remain real, unless we bear witness to it to a world in need.

Recall three instances in our Lord's life. When He healed him that was possessed (Mark 5:19), He admonished the man restored to his right mind: “Go home to thy friends and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee.” When the disciples of John the Baptist came to inquire of Him, “Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?” He answered by leading them through the city, to observe His works of mercy, and then said: “Go and show John again those things which ye do see and hear.” When discussing with the lawyer how a man might find eternal life, the Lord told the story of the Good Samaritan; then he added: “Go and do thou likewise.” Our Christian life is to be one of witnessing action. Always it is to urge us to go; to “tell” or “show” or “do.” Our faith must be a living faith. We present ourselves, our souls and bodies, a living sacrifice.

“The things which are above,” for which we are bidden

to seek in our religion, must show themselves forth in the ordinary, everyday attitudes that we show toward the children of men. Our solemn professions of devotion to the Christ and His Church, our periods of meditation, our sacred receiving of the sacramental Bread of Life: all are of no avail unless we translate these manifestations to us of God's love and life into creative and loving conduct, becoming a Christian.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, Who evermore dost love them that love Thee, and dost refresh them with the gift of Thy mercy; confirm us, we pray Thee, in every good word and work, that our mouths may speak of wisdom and our hearts muse of understanding, so that, setting our whole trust in Thee, we may set forward Thy Kingdom, and with all saints obtain Eternal Life.

—*From the Mozarabic Psalter*



Saturday

THE GOOD NEWS OF THE RISEN LIFE

READING: I Corinthians 15:12-26

OUR MEDITATIONS FOR THIS WEEK, ON THE SUBJECT OF REDEMPTION by the Risen Life, would be incomplete if they did not provoke some thinking on the subject of the Resurrection itself.

The story of the Resurrection needs to be told to three widely variant groups of people. First, there are those who once a year visit the churches; who accept Easter Day as a holiday and on it welcome more the coming of spring than the Rising of Lord Jesus from the grave. Or else, it may be, they simply yield to the pressure of a commercialized advertising of the season. The fact of the Resurrection is no more real to them than is, perhaps, the address of a friend in some far-away city, upon whom one may call if one happens by any chance to visit that city. These people are not conscious of what is implied even in the historic fact of the Resurrection. They are not conscious of the fact that Easter is the guarantee of the gift of life. Their ears are heavy. It may indeed be true that they *cannot* understand.

There is a second group to whom the Resurrection must be presented. Those who have close ties in the world beyond are eager for news of their loved ones. It is not enough to tell them that man has always believed in life after death. You tell them the same story, but in different language, in the language of hope, and of a faith that may become the substance of things longed for. As Dr. Jacks has said,

"All proofs are worthless unless the valor of the soul is present to sustain them."

A third group is composed of those who are honest in their search for light and life, but are not able to accept on faith our story, or any story. We can speak to them about the incompleteness of life, the witness of the heart to immortality, and the orderliness of nature, but they still remain skeptics, and none too happy in their skepticism. We cannot afford to let them go.

What shall we say now to these three groups of people?

From the first, the casual, we would take away none of the joy that comes to them at Easter-time. But Jesus said of the abundant life, "Seek ye *first* the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." The Church does not put that obligation on you, but life does. God cannot make you take what you are not alert enough to receive. You have to expose yourself to deeper things than the trivial if you are to share in a life that is more than trivial. If you would know anything about the Resurrection and the Resurrected Life, it is you, not we, who must put you in the way of it.

To the second group we would answer by reminding of some of the things that Jesus said: "In my Father's house there are many mansions. If it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." "Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise," He said to the dying thief. "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." We must take all of His message to us. We are too easily inclined to accept some of the things He said and forget others. Jesus was accused of "hard sayings." "Except ye be *born again* of water and of the Spirit, ye cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." "Except ye *eat the flesh of the Son of God and drink His blood*, you have no life in you." "Except ye be *converted* and become as a little child, you shall in no wise

enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." "He that *loseth his life* shall save it." "*Narrow* is the way that leadeth to eternal life." A Christian must take it all. There can be no good life after death save after struggle here. Though we have had glimpses into the reality of the Continued Life and are conscious from time to time of the great cloud of witnesses that surround us, yet there can be no lessening of effort, here and now, if we are to enter truly into the future joy of the blessed ones. We ought to have no concern for redeemed loved ones. They wait for us; they long to welcome us; they love us every minute now. But shall we attain to where they are, or shall we be so unworthy that we miss forever their longed-for comradeship in Paradise?

And with the third group, let us not argue. We might present to them some quotations from modern scientists who say that they are convinced that behind this world there is purpose and intelligence. We can suggest to them that they watch personality at its best and not at its worst, and see if extinction at death seems reasonable in the light of it. But argument alone will not convert them. Only resurrected lives have power in persuading such as these.

PRAYER

O Lion of the tribe of Judah, O Root of David, open to us the light of Thy knowledge, that we, in reverent solemnity of Thy Resurrection, may, with Thine elect ones and with all angelic hosts, sing praises in Thy Kingdom to Thy glorious Name; through thy mercy, O Lord God, who art blessed, and dost live, and governest all things to the ages of the Ages.

—From the Mozarabic Breviary



HOLY WEEK

REDEEMER THROUGH THE CROSS

Monday

THE PLEDGE OF THE TRIUMPH

HOLY WEEK, THE WEEK OF SUPREME TRAGEDY, OPENS ON a note of victory. We have had our triumphal procession, waving palms and shouts of glad acclaim, all the city stirred by the entrance into the royal capital of a King, lowly and riding upon an ass, but none the less a King. This beginning was a pledge of what was to come to pass. The King went on His way. He set His face like a flint to go to His great sacrifice. But Calvary was but one necessary part of the plan for accomplishing the glory of His Father through the salvation of the souls of men, the bringing home of God's banished ones again. The ultimate objective of our thoughts in Holy Week is not to be Calvary and its Cross of shame, but the breaking of the bonds of death, the Ascension, the opening of the gates of Paradise, so long closed to man by man's sin, and His glorious entry there—the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; and all this followed by the sending of the Holy Spirit to dwell in the hearts of His people, to guide and teach them that they, too, may tread the same redemptive

path; that they may have their part in His Passion and, entering into the power of His Resurrection, themselves ascend into Heaven and share His glory there.

Yesterday we bore our palms, symbols of a victory yet to come. Our part in that rejoicing—if it meant to us anything at all—was a pledge, which we uttered in the presence of God and men, that we intended to have part in the *final* triumph when the King will come in that triumph which is more than symbolic, when Jesus will gather together His elect and take His power and reign. A resolution to do a certain thing carries with it always, and of necessity, a corresponding resolution to use the means required for fulfilling it. If a man makes a promise to go to a certain town, he includes in it, by implication, a promise to use the right means of transportation. He places himself under obligation to secure his ticket, and to be in the train at the right time and place. Our participation in these present solemn exercises will not be honest unless we are determined to go *all the way with Jesus*, to use the means without which we can have no strength for the journey, no assurance of attaining the end.

First, let us realize that unless we are one with Him in His Passion, we cannot be one with Him in His glory, and that there is one obstacle, and one only, to union with Him. That obstacle is sin. Sin is any conscious violation of the known will of the loving God. It is saying *No* to God, and *Yes* to Satan. That is the worst thing in the world, because it is the only thing that can stand between the soul and God. Naught else can bar the way to participation in His Passion, and a consequent share in His glory. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him."

But sin need not bar the way one moment longer than we will it to do so. As it was an act of our wills which created sin, so can an act of the will create the condition prerequisite for the elimination of sin. Penitence, a true sor-

row based on the realization that we have by our sin wounded the heart of a loving Saviour, will bring that pardon which can and will remove every obstacle. It will set our feet once more in the way of the Cross, which is the way of glory, since Calvary is but a way station *en route* to the throne and crown which have been promised to those who love Him.

But penitence means much more than the mere taking away of sin. Forgiveness, absolution, takes away all guilt, but it does much more. It also infuses into the whole moral and spiritual nature an objective power and capacity, on the one hand to meet again the old temptations and to conquer them, and on the other to go forward in the way of righteousness, running swiftly the race that is set before us. The service of God to which we are called is not a negative thing, but positive in high degree. It is of paramount importance that we understand this, for there are many who think that holiness consists in a mere absence of sin, whereas the putting away of sin is only a preparation for the greater service of God. Through the power of the Cross we are not only to put off the old man, but to put on the new; we must not only abhor that which is evil, but cleave to that which is good. In short, we are to follow in the footsteps of the Christ, who not only did no sin but was able to say, "I do always those things which please Him."

One other thought we must consider at the beginning of this Holy Week. If the Cross is a supreme manifestation of the malice of sin, it is at the same time a supreme manifestation of the love of God for sinners. Sin is unspeakable dishonor to God; but we dishonor Him the more if we think of our sin without at the same time thinking of His love for those who have so offended Him. His reaction to our sin is not one of wrath, but of mercy and loving-kindness, if only we will turn to Him in sorrowing love. God is love, and in Him is no hate at all. We have

been praying all Lent to Him who hateth nothing that He hath made. In the first recorded instruction of our Lord He declared that "God so loved the world"—the world lying in sin and rebellion against His love—"that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This God who so loved is not only God the Son, but God the Holy Trinity. The whole love of the Trinity burned in the Passion on Calvary, for as there is but one will in the Godhead, so is there but one love, shared by the three ineffable Persons, and that triune love is poured out in infinite abundance upon all who will open their hearts to receive it.

PRAYER

O Crucified Saviour, who upon the Cross didst purchase for me the power of an endless life, grant that I may so put away all evil things that Thy life may ever live and grow in me. Teach me to do the thing that pleaseth Thee. Let me deny myself. Let me choose and follow Thee. Let me think on the misery of my sin—but contemplate also the love and sweetness of my God. Let me fear eternal loss; but, certain of Thy love, let me wait, expectant of the everlasting glory.



Tuesday

THE GIFT OF OPPORTUNITY

THE HISTORY OF GOD'S DEALING WITH HIS PEOPLE CONSTITUTES a tireless record of opportunity. It began in Eden with our first parents, when, on the occasion of their disobedience, He came down as was His wont, in the cool of the day, to give His erring children a loving call to repentance. He did not turn away from them. It was they who fled, and sought to hide themselves from Him. Instead of hearts contrite and sorrowful, He found only excuses, and a sullen and ungenerous shifting of blame to others. But the love of God could not be stayed. Again and again in the history of Israel, we find the like story. Moses in the wilderness challenged them in their apostasy: "Who is on the Lord's side?" On the occasion of the gathering of their great leader, Joshua, unto his fathers, the same divine demand was made: "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." And on the height of Carmel, in a day of crisis, the prophet of God cried to assembled Israel, "How long halt ye between two opinions?" And then came the final opportunity of choice, the last that was to be given them, though they knew it not—"Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you, this Man or Barabbas?"

The history of God's loving pursuit of His People finds its epitome in the life of every soul. Every step in the progress of the soul toward its God-ordained destiny depends upon the choices made day by day. It is this power of choosing that constitutes man a moral being. The choice is not made once for all. It is a continuous course of choosing.

Not only have we the power to choose; but we have no power not to choose. It is a forced option. There is no neutral ground in the spiritual life. Not to choose is to choose wrongly. Not to choose the higher is to choose the lower; not to choose good is to choose evil; not to choose the service of God is to choose the service of Satan. Nor is the choice we are required to make always a clearly defined one between what is good and what is evil. It is often a choice between the good and the better. But every choice affects the operation of the divine life within. Every choice is a yielding of wider areas of our life to the reign of Christ, or else it is a saying, in respect to some moral or spiritual issue, "We will not have this man to reign over us." Every such choice may not involve us in disaster, but it will involve us in disloyalty; and though His goodness may not hold the wrong choice against us as actual sin, yet, if we love Him, how intolerant will we be of even the slightest disloyalty to Him who has so loved us.

Every right choice which God wills us to make, if made with all our heart, is a step forward in the way of holiness. This reminds us that growth and development is a universal law of life. This holds true in every sphere, whether it be physical, intellectual, or spiritual. The athlete who fails to develop his strength and skill is soon outclassed; the scholar who neglects his study soon grows stale; the soul that stops in the Godward way begins immediately to deteriorate, morally and spiritually. There is no such thing as standing still. We are always either climbing the heights or else sinking back into the depths. If this progress is in reality a law of life, then we can be sure that the love of God is continually calling us on to higher things; and we must make a ceaseless response to His ceaseless appeal of love. With the Psalmist our resolution must ever be, "I will hearken what the Lord God will say concerning me." Pleased as His divine condescension may be with what we

have already accomplished in His service, He is never satisfied, because He sees in us still further and higher possibilities. Because we have been faithful in a few things, He is encouraged to spur us on to greater and higher things; and in our response to Him we receive ever greater strength and resolution to go still farther, and with ever swifter steps, in the way He has set for us. If we are faithful in our response, progress will never cease, either in this world or in the world to come. The blessed ones in Heaven, as they stand before the throne, rejoicing in the Beatific Vision of God, are able always to sing, as the Apocalypse assures us, a *new* song before the throne and before the Lamb, new because there is ever being unfolded before them new beauties and new glories of the Godhead; and it is given to them, with ever deepening knowledge and ever aspiring love, to see and appreciate more and more the unfolding revelation of the glory of the Trinity.

All depends upon the response we give in this life to the loving leading of the Holy Spirit. Let there be no parleying, then, with ourselves or with the Tempter. As the Spirit, seeing the limitless possibilities that lie in us for glorifying God, is never satisfied with what we do, but seeks always to promote us to still higher honor in the divine service, so let us never rest. As St. Augustine warns us, "If you cry, 'Enough,' you are lost." Pontius Pilate balanced the claims of Christ against those of Barabbas, as though they were for a moment comparable. If we dally with a temptation, if we stop to calculate whether we shall respond to the Spirit's gentle suggestion to give ourselves to some further work of love, in that dallying and in that hesitation we place ourselves in peril of questioning the claim of Christ to our complete love and allegiance. Let us give Him our best. It may, indeed, be a poor best, but we are working in union with the divine omnipotence and, if God be for us, who can be against us? The end is sure. His power and glory

cannot fail. The splendid destiny awaits us. We have but to reach out and grasp it.

PRAYER

O Spirit of the living God, tender and compassionate, look not upon what I am or what I have been, but upon what I long to be for love of Thee. Let Thy pity cleanse me; let Thy wisdom teach me; may Thine omnipotence bless me. May Thy sweetness and goodness draw me and unite me to Thee forever.



Wednesday

THE LOVE OF THE PASSION

WE WERE THINKING YESTERDAY THAT THE PASSION OF OUR Lord was the highest manifestation that has ever been made, of the love of God for poor sinners. It was the love of the Father; it was the love of the Son; it was the love of the Blessed Spirit; for the love that dwells in God is one and undivided. Where one Person loves, all the ineffable Three must love. We might paraphrase the ancient Athanasian Creed to express this: "The Father is Love, the Son is Love, and the Holy Ghost is Love; and yet there are not three loves, but one Love." In the Cross all this mighty love is given to us without stint, in the fullness of His infinite omnipotence.

But in the life and Passion of our Lord there is given to us something more than this, if more be possible. While there is but one undivided love in the Godhead, in the Incarnate Lord there are two loves, because, being also Man, He possesses the power of human love as well. By Him not only is all the love of His divine Nature poured out upon us, but all the fullness of love that dwells in His perfect human heart. The only limit lies in our limited capacity to receive it; but the more we open our hearts to Him, the more is our capacity for love deepened and expanded. The Psalmist had some such thought in mind when he cried, "I will run the way of Thy commandments when Thou shalt enlarge my heart."

All this involves a question of practical method. It is all well enough for us to say that if we open our hearts to Him

He is able to come in and dwell in us, and by this indwelling develop and expand our capacity for loving Him and our fellow man; but what are we to do in order to bring to pass this consummation so devoutly to be wished? The answer is simple. Love expresses itself in action, in service. Love must act as fire must burn. As fire can have no existence apart from burning, so love cannot exist save in action. Knowing, then, the necessity and value of love, have we in our hearts an honest desire to serve God? That is all that is necessary, even though it be accompanied by no emotional feeling or urge. If, having this desire, we deliberately cherish a thought in our hearts, or speak a word, or perform an action, because we believe that this thought, word, or action will be pleasing to Him, then we have opened our hearts to Him; He has come in and is dwelling there; and every repetition introduces Him more fully into our life, enables us to love Him more and to serve Him with greater ease and faithfulness in the power of that love. Thus, in the divine eagerness of His love, He comes to us, if only we will permit it, and coming, dwells in us in all the infinite plenitude of His power of love, asking us only to give our hearts to Him, that He may employ them as the instruments of His own perfect love.

In order to test ourselves, whether we are making the necessary response to love, we must look at some of the characteristics of the love which He Himself so supremely manifested in His Passion.

First of all, let us note that it was a patient love. With what patience did He bear with His disciples in their dullness, their want of understanding and faith, their ingratitude! Impetuous Peter throws himself into the sea to walk to His Lord and, because the wind is boisterous, his faith fails, as though His Lord were not Lord also of the seas and of the winds; but how tender and gentle is the reproach: "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" We

hearing Him speaking to Philip, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" Gently He stays the hand of Peter when he would fight for the Kingdom with carnal weapons; and even to Judas, while he was in the very act of betraying Him, he gives the dear name "Friend." He rebukes, He reproaches, but ever tender and loving, with never a note of asperity or impatience. It is the love that suffereth long, the love that is kind.

The love of the Passion was also a forgiving love. The look which caused Peter to weep so bitterly was a look of pardoning love. The particular word which the evangelist uses implies a searching gaze, one winged by a love that penetrated to the depths of Peter's soul, stripped it bare of the cloak of self-deceiving, and in the light of that love made him see himself as he was. The Lord's prayer for His murderers, His words to the dying thief, His rebuke to Thomas, all spoke of the infinite measure of His forgiving love to those who had wronged Him.

Finally, it was a persevering love, "He loved them unto the end." All the disciples had grieved and wounded Him; but only one of them proved finally reprobate, for the rest of them could not resist that love which ever pursued them, the love which would take no denial, which "suffereth long," which "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

The love of the Passion, the power of that great Sacrifice, will be of little avail for us, unless we allow the love which is spread abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit to work in some degree in us as His love worked in Him. "This is my commandment," He said to His disciples the last night of His earthly life, "that ye love one another as I have loved you"; and He gave to them the crucial test of faithfulness, which each could apply to himself: "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." If we fail habitually in loving patience with our fellow men, in pa-

tience with their faults and weaknesses, with the slights and injuries they do to us, we cannot call ourselves the friends and lovers of the Christ. Patience is but one of the manifold operations of the virtue of love. Where love dwells, patience will surely have its perfect work.

Finally, patience is very nearly akin to perseverance. The patient soul will be able not only to endure all things, but to endure them to the end, for such a soul is armed with the power of a love which labor cannot wear away, a love which hardness cannot daunt. In neglect and unkindness, in slight and injury, however cruel, it will find only opportunity for the exercise of love, even as our Lord found in the sin of man the occasion for showing forth the unconquerable love of the Passion.

PRAYER

Most gracious Lord, my All, my only Good: may Thy strong love possess my soul; may it work in me and through me. Cause me to love Thee as Thou wouldst be loved by me. In the power of Thy love, grant me a spirit humble and patient, that, remembering the wounds my sins have dealt to Thee, I may be tender-hearted, forgiving those who injure me, even as the Father for Thy sake hath forgiven me.



Maundy Thursday

AN EVERLASTING LOVE

THURSDAY IN HOLY WEEK PRESENTS TO US TWO TREMENDOUS events in the earthly life of our Incarnate Lord; events, therefore, of transcending importance in the history of the human race. These are the institution of the Holy Sacrament and the Agony in Gethsemane; and we shall see that there is a very vital connection between the two. Interpreters of the life of Christ have generally regarded the Agony as the first act of the Passion, but there was a prelude to it. In instituting the Sacrament, He gave to His people, until the end of time, a memorial of that Passion. We cannot disassociate the two. He suffered in the Garden and on the Cross for the sons of men, and He has left us this Mystery in which, as St. Paul assures us, we "do shew the Lord's death till He come." We set it forth before God and man. We set it forth before man as a continual reminder of the love and mercy of God, and before God as a Sacrifice, a memorial of the great work of Christ, the God-Man, on Calvary. In obedience to His command, the Church does what He did in the upper room that night. At the hands of the priest, she takes the bread and wine and consecrates them to be the Body and Blood of Christ. In this act

We here present, we here spread forth to Thee,
The only offering perfect in Thine eyes,
The one, true, pure, immortal Sacrifice.

Primarily and chiefly, that service is an offering to God of the Sacrifice of Calvary; as the Church's Prayer of Conse-

cration puts it—"here" and "now" "we present before Thy Divine Majesty the memorial Thy Son hath commanded us to make." It is not a repetition of Calvary. That were impossible, for the one sufficient Sacrifice was offered on the Cross once for all, with efficacy and power for the sons of men until the end of time. It is no repetition, then, but a perpetuation of that power and efficacy. We have a Sacrifice, and daily we can plead it at our altars for our sins, for our needs, spiritual and temporal, for the needs of the Church, and for those of the whole world. It is as though we were standing beside the Lord's holy Mother and St. John on Calvary on that first Good Friday, pointing the Father to what the Son there accomplishes for us, pleading the merits of that work, asking for what we will, "according to His will," in virtue of that "one, true, pure, immortal Sacrifice."

For centuries men have called this Sacrament "the Sacrament of His love." The love of God works infinitely in every Sacrament, but in these Holy Mysteries that love seems to show itself with peculiar urgency and tenderness. In the night in which He instituted it, He gave them the comforting promise of the Holy Spirit, but even this did not satisfy His love. "*I will come to you,*" He said, and He gave to them the Sacrament of His Body and Blood that He might be with them even unto the end of the world. Thus, with an infinite love, did He long to be with us, with a longing that broke His great Heart on the Cross; and yet we love Him not. He desired to make His dwelling in the inmost chambers of our being; and we weary of Him when we have knelt in His Presence but one little hour.

St. Paul is careful to tell us that our blessed Lord instituted this Sacrament "in the night in which He was betrayed." In the very hour when evil men were conspiring to destroy Him, to bring His work of love to naught,

while those nearest to Him were engaging in jealous, unloving strife as to which of them should be accounted the greatest, it was then that the infinite ingenuity of His love devised this Sacrament, that He might abide with us forever. His delights were with the sons of men. No recluse He, dwelling apart from His fellows. He "rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth."

Sometimes we are tempted to cry, "O that I had lived in those days when the Blessed Christ walked the ways of this world! O that I could have looked into His eyes, and heard that loving voice speaking to me, and felt the touch of His blessed hands!" But so freely has He given Himself to us in this Sacrament of His mighty love that we have no reason to remember with holy envy those who walked and talked with Him in the days of His earthly pilgrimage. They looked upon Him in the time of His humiliation and weakness; in this august Sacrament we possess, and are made one with, a loving Christ who is no longer girt about with infirmity, no longer the suffering One, but a Christ our Saviour and our Brother, risen, ascended, glorified at His Father's right hand, yet condescending to dwell with us under humble veils of bread and wine. Never let us permit that thrilling truth to be obscured in our understanding. There is, there can be, but one Christ, the God-Man, glorified in the heavenly places with the glory that was His before the world was. Whenever we receive the Holy Sacrament, we receive Him whom the saints and angels look upon in the presence of the Beatific Vision. We receive Him, perfect God and perfect Man, all that He is, and all that He has, so far as is possible to our poor capacity. We receive Him, we receive His glory. Every Communion is a further participation in the mystery of the divine nature of Him who loves us and gives Himself, not only for us, but to us.

What response shall we make to this so great love of our

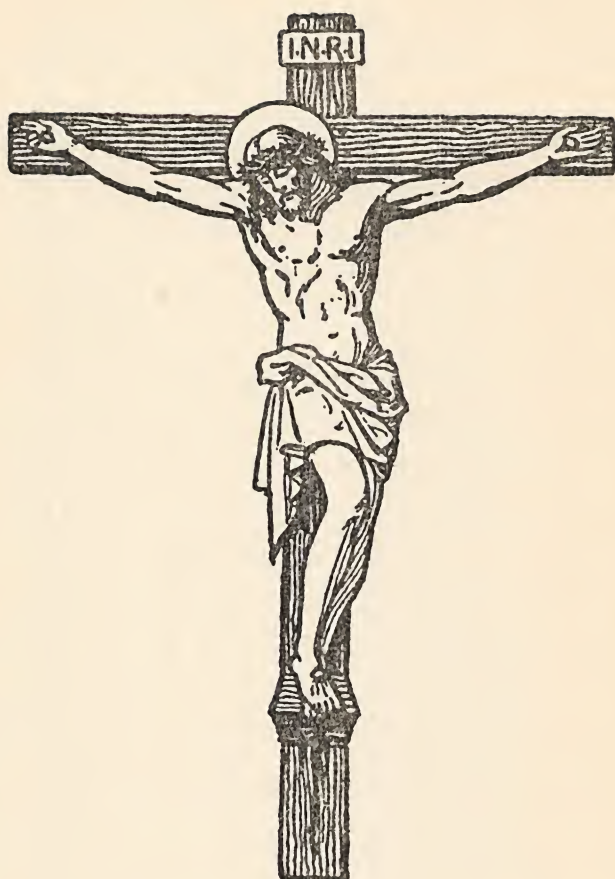
Lord? "What reward shall I give unto the Lord for all the benefits that He hath done unto me?" He asks but one thing—"Son, give Me thine heart." And giving my heart to Him, I try to see that no evil thing may enter in, to put His love to shame.

PRAYER

O dear Lord Christ, Thou art the goal of all my travel, the safe harbor of my voyaging, the crown of my desire. Let me walk in Thee, the Light, that I lose not Thee, the Way. Give to me the fullness of Thy love, for love alone is life and he who loves not lives not. Make me clean of sin that I may love Thee, for sin and love dwell not together in the soul.

The Day of the
Passion of the Redeemer
Upon the Holy Cross







Good Friday

THE WORDS FROM THE CROSS

Foreword

IT IS NECESSARY, AS WE APPROACH THE CROSS ON GOOD FRIDAY, that we understand and keep in mind who it was that wrought this great work on Calvary. Had Jesus Christ been but man, the Cross would have been an awful tragedy, but no more so than in the case of others in history who have suffered unjustly in some great cause. But the crucified Christ was God, the eternal Son, made Man. He was very God of very God, being of one essence with the Father, by whom all things were made. That fact makes an infinite difference in the significance of His actions, and in the weight that must be attached to His words. Always in human affairs the identity of a man makes fundamental difference in the value of his acts. I might sign my name to a certain paper, and it would be only a few meaningless strokes of a pen. Another might sign the same paper, and by that action promulgate a law which would condition the life and happiness of millions. Let us not forget that it was God who suffered on the Cross, God who wrought this great salvation, God who spake as never man spake—it was God, acting in and through the human nature which He had taken up into the Godhead when He became Incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary.

It is the fashion in our time to dispute concerning the nature and powers of Christ. Men say He must have been this, or He could or could not have done that, because,

so they think, His life and work must be equated to the human nature which we see in operation round about us. We forget that human nature, as we see it working in the history of the race, is a thing blighted, maimed, and distorted by the consequences of sin; and "in the mad pride of our intellectuality" we create a Christ in our own image and likeness. We have no way of forming any conception of the powers and capacities of *perfect* humanity, for the reason that we have never had adequate experience of it. Jesus Christ is the only perfect—and that is to say, normal—man who has lived since the first disobedience "brought death into the world, and all our woe." We have, in the slender narrative of the Gospels, some glimpses of His mighty powers; but in most instances we have no way of knowing whether those powers were extraordinary, existing and exercised in virtue of His divinity, or whether they belonged to the nature of a perfect Humanity. Nor shall we, on this Good Friday, seek solution of these problems. We shall, as the Spirit may help us, kneel humbly, and with the simple love of little children, before the Cross. Whatever His powers may have been, and wherever those powers may have resided, we know one thing, which is enough: we know that He who hung and died there is our God, who loved us and gave Himself for us. We shall kneel, then, and hearken to His words; we shall meditate upon them in our hearts, if haply we may learn the better to know Him, to love Him, to serve Him. If we can achieve this, it will only be a matter of time when the mists will be lifted, when, in the clear sunlight of His presence, we shall know as we are known.

God, on each succeeding memorial day of His death and Passion, prepares such blessings for His people that there is not room to receive them. He does His part perfectly; it depends on us whether the blessings will be appropriated, whether we shall go down to our house this evening

filled with His love and power, or whether we shall have been merely the subjects of certain emotional reactions that have produced no profound purpose, no resolution of renewed love and service. On more than one occasion in our Lord's ministry we find Him ready and alert to heal and bless, but see those upon whom He would pour out His gifts unwilling to receive them. St. Luke tells us of a day when "there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judæa, and Jerusalem, and the power of the Lord was present to heal them." What an opportunity was this, for them all to carry back to the waiting multitudes throughout that land the blessing of the loving Christ. But only one poor paralytic had his sins forgiven and his strength restored. Jesus passes along the crowded highway, and the people throng Him on every side, pressing upon Him to hear His gracious words. But only one obscure old woman in faith reached forth timidly the tips of her fingers to touch His garments, and so received the healing and blessing that He would give to all. Likewise it was on Calvary. There were the soldiers, the thieves, the blaspheming Jews, the loud and curious rabble; but only a poor thief and a soldier acknowledged Him to be the Son of God (not knowing, perhaps, what the words meant), and so reaped the blessing which was for all, had they but claimed it. What about *this* day? The Lord is present to heal. His touch hath still its ancient power. Shall I be healed?

PRAYER

O Jesus Christ, Saviour and Lover of the world, recall the fivefold Agony of Thy wounds; recall the bitter scorn with which Thine enemies blasphemed Thee; recall the awful loneliness of Thy Passion; and by Thy Cross and Precious Blood, save us and deliver us.

The First Word from the Cross

Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.—St. Luke 23:34

Good Friday is a day of contrasts. Here is the Christ; and here are the thieves—His blessing and forgiveness, and their reviling. Here is His Mother, her heart swept by an unspeakable grief and strengthened by a mighty love; and here is the mob, hating, jeering, blaspheming. All this contrast finds expression in the first word. It is a contrast the force of which does not adequately appear in our Authorized Version. St. Luke, according to our usual English Bible, tells how, “when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. *Then* said Jesus, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” The conjunction is not only weak but inaccurate. Rather it should be rendered by the English conjunction “but,” for a clear contrast was evidently in the mind of the Evangelist when he originally wrote the sentence. “When they had come to Calvary, they, on the one hand, crucified Him between two thieves, *but, on the other hand,* Jesus said, “Father, forgive them.”

Not only did He pray for their forgiveness, but He made excuse for them, acting as their advocate with the Father, even in the moment of their sin. The ground of His appeal was that they knew not what they did. How, then, could theirs be sin, needing forgiveness? Strictly speaking, there can be no sin save where knowledge is present. If we are ignorant of the fact that a certain thing is the will of God, then we are not to be held guilty if we fail to do it. Yet even under those conditions, we must bear a serious blame. *Why* are we ignorant of the will of God? Is it that He has withheld from us the opportunity of knowing His will? Usually, far from it. We know not the will of God be-

cause our past unfaithfulness has blinded us. We may be excused from guilt in a present issue, but we can find no excuse for the refusal in times past to follow the light. Past sin brings present blindness, and present sin blinds us for the future; and in like manner every yielding of our wills to the loving guiding of the Holy Spirit clears our vision, enlightens our understanding, and makes right our judgment.

But whatever the guilt, whatever our persistence in sin, it can always be blotted out. The revelation of the pardoning love which wrought on the Cross is made all the clearer by the language the evangelist uses. The form of the verb is one of those significant imperfect tenses which occur so often in the New Testament, *implying continuous action*. St. Luke's language really means that when they crucified Him, when they reviled Him, again and again he kept crying, "Father, forgive them." He countered their continued hate with a continuing love. He matched the repeated scorn and insult, with the outpouring of a persistent pardoning grace; and His offer of this grace was not in vain. It was the power of that continuing love which wrought upon the heart of the dying thief, which brought conviction to the centurion, the chief executioner of Pilate's infamous decree. And St. Luke tells us, in the Acts of the Apostles, that two months later, "a great company of the priests"—the very men who cried out for His condemnation on Good Friday—"were obedient to the faith." The infinite power of that prayer is as operative today as it was on Calvary. It depends on our response whether it will be of avail *for us*.

PRAYER

Dear Lord Jesus, loving and compassionate, Thou didst stretch forth Thy Hands to me in mercy, and I smote them

with the cruel nails. By the power of Thy prayer amidst the sufferings of Thy Passion, save and deliver.

The Second Word from the Cross

Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.—St. Luke 23:43

The penitent thief was the first convert to be brought to a knowledge of his sins, to penitence and to pardon, through the prayer of our Lord for His enemies; and yet all the prayers of the saints, even Christ's all-powerful intercession itself, would have been unavailing unless that thief had done his part. St. Augustine says that God willed to create us without our consent and coöperation, but that He does not will to save us without our coöperation. The apostolic teaching is emphatic and repeated on this point. "Building up yourselves on your most holy faith," is St. Jude's injunction. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," commanded St. Paul; and St. Peter urges all who have obtained like precious faith with the saints, to "make their calling and election sure." True, we can do nothing of ourselves alone; yet God ordains that nothing shall be done without us. In His love He gives us the honor of being co-workers with Himself.

One might wonder how the dying thief could possibly have fulfilled the conditions required. His hands were fast to his cross, life was fast ebbing away, and the time was short. Yet when we come to analyze his state of mind and his actions, we find that he fulfilled everything that is required for a perfect conversion. For all time, in the Kingdom of God on earth, he has been the model penitent.

First, in his appeal to the dying Lord he confessed Him before all men as Messiah and Saviour. No other interpretation can be given his words, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom." The first step in conversion is to realize the *need* of a Saviour. A Saviour from

what? Not from eternal damnation; there is little in the New Testament about that. True, my condemnation will be everlasting if I lay not hold on Christ and walk with Him; but the Gospel tells us that He came "to save His people *from their sins*." Do I know what my sins are? Do I, like the penitent on his cross, bring them to the feet of Jesus on His Cross and leave them there? This man not only realized his sins, but he made humble confession of them, implying his willingness to make all the satisfaction that was possible. He was held back by no false shame; he made no excuses; he sought to hide or gloss over nothing. "We receive the due reward of our deeds; we indeed suffer justly," he said to his companion in crime and punishment.

Furthermore, he testified to the perfection of Christ, the Lord and Saviour. "This man hath done nothing amiss." Realizing that there was none other Name under heaven whereby he might be saved, he cried humbly to Him for the help that could come only from Him: "Lord, remember me."

Lastly, in him was conceived a true care for the souls of others, a recognition of the responsibility that lay upon him because God, in His mercy, had sent the light of Christ into his soul. The penitent thief was the first Christian missionary. To his blasphemous fellow-thief he cried, "Dost thou not fear God?" He sought to make his companion in sin his companion in salvation. He could not keep the pardoning love of God to himself; he longed to see it poured out upon another. He wished to be the instrument of the divine love to him whom in times past he had encouraged in evil.

We have thought of Good Friday as a day of contrasts, and this is specially to be noted in the response of our Lord to the cry of the penitent. "Remember me"—the words imply a coming separation. We do not ask to be kept in

mind by those with whom we are present. In some far-off time, in some remote sphere, this Jesus, now the scorn of the world, would, the thief believed, come into a kingdom. "Then, Lord, remember me." But our Lord would not have it so. "With me in Paradise." Love, the unifying power which knits heart to heart, would tolerate no separation. And again, "When Thou comest"—at whatever distant day the penitent was glad patiently to await that time, to tarry the Lord's leisure. But love brooks no delay. "To-day shalt thou be with Me." The order in which, in the original Greek, St. Luke disposes the words he employs in reporting this incident, reveals the deep personal character of our Lord's love for sinners. "Verily, to *thee* I say, Today with *Me* shalt thou be in Paradise." One cannot fail to note the emphatic position of the pronouns "thee" and "me." The love of the Passion is a deep, personal love for each one of us. He does not love us, only as, with some wide and general affection, He loves the whole human race. It is the other way round. He loves the human race because, with an everlasting love, He loves each human soul.

PRAYER

O dear Lord Jesus Christ, pierced and wounded for my sins, without Thee I can do nothing; with Thee I can do all things; only in Thee can I serve Thee well. Thou hast said in Thy mercy, "Come unto Me and I will give you rest." Lord, I come, I come.

The Third Word from the Cross

Woman, behold thy son. Behold thy mother.—St. John 19:26, 27

We now turn from a consideration of sin to a remembrance of sanctity; from sinners to holy ones; from blasphemers to lovers. Strange that our Lord should have given His first thought to His murderers, and then should

have stopped to comfort and forgive the dying thief, promising him the joys of union with Himself in Paradise, when all the while there stood by the Cross His Blessed Mother and the Beloved Disciple, humbly waiting some word from Him. But ever thus has God dealt with those whom He loved the most. If you hope some day to be a saint, do not think that God will especially coddle you. He has never dealt with His saints in such fashion. "In the world ye shall have tribulation," is His promise, and His own hand takes part in the loving discipline of those He would draw nearest to Himself, for "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." Nor would those holy two beside the Cross have had it otherwise. Rather, because they were saints, they did not grudge one moment of the time that He devoted to seeking and saving them that were lost. Not their own solace but, rather, His honor and glory was their first and uppermost desire; and how could He be better glorified than by a winning to Himself of those who as yet knew not the mighty love that He desired to give to men and women.

They are the saints who place God first, their neighbor next, and themselves last. We think of them as standing in the presence of God in heaven; we mention their names in the Liturgy of the Church. They seem, too often, far off and remote from the sphere of our sorrow and our sin. When some one seems to intimate that we should be like them, we say, "O, I am not setting up to be a saint." Are you not? Do you not realize that God has made you for no other purpose than that you should become a saint; that all the machinery of the Church, all the power of the Holy Ghost, is at work in the world only to achieve that one end, to make you a saint; that if you do not attain to that good end which is the only end to which you are called, the alternative is to shut yourself out from the face of God forever?

We must find out who these saints are, and how we can attain to companying with them. They are the kind of folk to whom St. Paul wrote, them that dwelt in Philippi, them that he addressed as "the saints which are at Philippi." They were not especially "holy" people, perhaps; but they had been baptized into Jesus Christ, and, however weak, or even from time to time falling into sin, yet were sincerely and perseveringly seeking after the holiness of our Lord. They were the common, simple sort of Christian, faithfully saying their prayers, with loving trust in the God to whom they prayed; men and women who made their communions, with thanksgiving to God for the unspeakable Gift His love vouchsafed to them; people who thought as little as possible of self and sought every opportunity, like the Lord, to "go about doing good."

In short, they had a passion for holiness as yet unattained, the same kind of passion that some men show for making money, or that others have for attaining distinction in the world. They let nothing interfere with their quest after it. They mercilessly tried to eliminate from their lives all that would be a hindrance to the end to which they had devoted themselves. They marked their steps; they laid aside every weight and, forgetting the things that were behind, pressed on to the things that were before. We have all known such souls. Some of them have been amongst those who have been dearest to us amongst earthly friends. They have died. We trust that now, having sought humbly in this world to be holy, they are numbered amongst God's saints in glory everlasting. How eagerly do they wait for our coming! They cry to us—could we but hear them—"Awake! Arise! Moments fly which will never return. This day offers glorious opportunities; tomorrow may not be yours. Heaven awaits you, with all the glorious company—St. John and the Holy Mother of God, the holy ones of all time past, the holy ones that you have known and loved."

Shall we disappoint them? Shall we deny that friend, that mother, that child we lost? They wait for us, expectant. And with them, as their Lord and our Lord, is He who to win a place among them for us, gave Himself in the Sacrifice of Love, this day on Calvary.

PRAYER

O Blessed, glorified Christ, Thou hope of mankind, whose light shineth from afar upon earth's darkling clouds, behold Thy redeemed ones that cry unto Thee, the banished ones whom Thou dost bring home through the power of Thy Precious Blood. We are tossed upon the waves of this world; but Thou standest on the shore, beholding our sore peril. Save, Lord, lest we perish.

The Fourth Word from the Cross

My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me.—St. Mark 15:34

He would indeed be rash who attempted to solve the mystery that lies in this fourth saying of the Lord. Jesus is God. How could God forsake God? Or, if it was the withdrawing of the Godhead from the sacred Humanity of our Lord, what then became of the Incarnate life, for the union between the Divinity and the Humanity of our Lord cannot, from the nature of things, ever be broken. The most we can say is that there seems to have been an inscrutable eclipse in the human mind of Christ. For a time the Vision of God which was ever present to Him, was obscured.

But the fact that we cannot solve the mystery, does not prevent us from learning many profitable lessons from it. We cannot doubt that this experience was willed by our Lord, and brought to pass through the action of His will, in order that in His own human experience He might

sound all the depths and shoals of human suffering, spiritual as well as physical. How often does the soul of man find itself seemingly forsaken by God. There are times when He seems far away. We long for Him "in a barren and dry land where no water is." We seek to pray, and the words get no farther than our lips, while our hearts are dry like driven dust.

God allows these experiences, if for no other reason, at least to teach us that the life we are called upon to live in Christ is not a life of feeling and emotion. Indeed, so constant are these experiences that we are driven to the conclusion that spiritual dryness, far from being an extraordinary phenomenon, is a normal aspect of the spiritual life. One of the lessons we need to learn is that prayer is difficult in proportion to its reality. The value of prayer is to be estimated in terms of struggle, rather than in those of pleasure. A half-hour spent in the difficult labor of fighting distractions, even though the distractions be, for all our striving, so persistent as to prevent the positive work of prayer altogether, is a period of battle in which we have not yielded to the enemy, and therefore a period of victory. Distraction, dullness of spirit, inability to make real to ourselves the presence and love of God, provided that we do not yield to them, are raw material out of which may be fashioned crowns of glory. These difficulties are sent by God for our discipline, and in this He honors us. Again, they may be direct temptations from the devil, and in this, too, God honors us, for when He permits a soul to be tempted, it indicates that he fears not that the strength and fidelity of that soul will fail, if only that soul puts its trust in Him. It was this that St. James had in mind when he said, "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations."

The real test of spiritual worth lies not in faithfulness

when skies are clear and hearts full of all manner of sweet and comfortable consolations, but in the times of adversity. This is a principle which belongs not only to the higher life of the soul, but to every sphere of human action. The man who works only while his enthusiasms last, and gives up when the hard grind begins, is a failure from the start. The world's work, as well as the work of the kingdom of God, is accomplished only by a following of more than impulse. God may seem very far away, but He is no less the light of my soul because my eyes are holden; and grace does not need to advertise its presence by felt consolations. There was momentary darkness for the human soul of Christ; and the servant is not above his Master. It is a principle which obtains in the affairs of the Kingdom of God, that character can be developed only under adverse circumstances. There has never been progress in any human affairs except through effort to overcome contrary environment. In the history of individual men, as well as that of nations, the golden age has always been an age when there was struggle for existence, a struggle which brought out, as struggle always does, the best and highest that is in man.

There is one simple resolution we can make today which, if faithfully carried out, will insure true spiritual advance. Never, under any circumstances, give up prayers because you find them hard. Set the will upon Him; hold it there, though you seem to look out only into utter darkness. Accept the darkness, the often terrifying darkness, as "a godlike challenge in the night to our too reluctant wills."

PRAYER

O Jesus Christ, unfathomed depth of love compassionate, Life everlasting of the soul, Light unfailing to the heart that loves, recall the all-engulfing darkness of Thy soul, and by Thy Cross and Precious Blood, save and defend us.

The Fifth Word from the Cross

I thirst.—St. John 19:28

This saying of our Lord tells us of the complete, though progressive, acceptance by Him of the Father's will. Last night in the Garden, He cried in the midst of His agony, "Let this cup pass from me." But at the gate of the Garden, when His enemies came to seize Him and the disciples would have fought to save Him, He reproved them: "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" And now, on the Cross, He cries, "I thirst."

In comparing this Word with our Lord's fourth saying on Calvary, we find once again a series of vivid contrasts. The fourth Word speaks of His spiritual suffering; this of His suffering in the body. The one tells us of His Godhead, the other of His humanity. One witnesses to a dread of spiritual desolation, the other to an eager desire, a longing and a thirst.

But an eager and keen longing may easily become a snare. It may easily imply something of that merely emotional urge of which we have already thought. It is a common error for Christians to mistake mere emotion for solid virtue; and feeling for fact. Emotion, from the very nature of it, is rarely other than short-lived. When the emotion passes, there is danger of a devastating reaction, which is apt to lead to despondency and even to despair. Yesterday we were eager in our prayers; there was much of joy and uplift to religion. Heaven seemed deep and real, and God seemed very near to us. Today all is drab and gray; no color, no life, no vibrancy. At times like these, Satan is swift to whisper to us the temptation to discouragement. Or, if emotion does persist, and we seem ever to be soaring Godward on the wings of great enthusiasm, there comes

the equally grave peril of spiritual pride, which is the deadliest and most paralyzing of all sins.

God, in His loving care for us, would not have us thus deceived, and of His very faithfulness, as the Psalmist declares, He causes us to be troubled. It is, therefore, the safer course for us to consider not so much the eagerness of His thirsting as the troubling fact that our Lord on the Cross endured for us suffering beyond anything our imagination can picture, and that in this suffering for those He loved He found His highest joy.

But whether it be in a felt longing and desire for God, or in the parching thirst of a soul crucified with Christ, there are practical safeguards which we can profitably employ. Two may well be suggested. They are not theoretical, but have again and again been tested by God's faithful servants, and have been proved of inestimable benefit.

First, whether the soul be borne up on a mighty surge of sweetness and eager joy or be cast into the depths of great spiritual sorrow, let one's reaction be tempered by a deliberate act of humiliation. Repeat over and over two prayers from the Gospel: "Lord, I am not worthy"—the prayer of the centurion of whom Christ testified that He had not found so great faith, no, not in Israel; and then, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," the prayer of the publican whom our Lord declared went down to his house justified.

Our second safeguard lies in making an act of thanksgiving to God for whatever He has sent. Nothing comes to us from His hand save that which is good. Even those things which men are accustomed to think of as the paramount evils of life—loss of health, poverty, bereavement, death itself—if met in the right spirit, cannot fail to bring us stores of grace and strength. As saintly William Law has said, "If anyone would tell you the shortest way to all happiness and all perfection, he must tell you to make

a rule to thank and praise God for everything that happens to you." Take your Psalter and choose out for yourself some of the many expressions of praise and gratitude which are to be found there, expressions of which the Holy Spirit Himself is the author, and which through thousands of years have been the strength and consolation of innumerable saints. Learn them by heart, and repeat them continually.

Whatever blessing may come to you, however, do not think that your thirst for Him can ever be assuaged, for every gift He makes of Himself only stirs us to a greater desire for Him.

For they that eat Me hunger sore,
And they that drink Me thirst the more;
Desiring naught, below, above,
Save Jesus, whom their spirits love.

PRAYER

O Jesus Christ, unfailing Fountain of eternal love, recall the parching thirst Thou didst endure that we might drink the waters of eternal life; and by Thy Cross and Passion, save us and deliver us.

The Sixth Word from the Cross

It is finished.—St. John 19:30

There is an incident in the early ministry of our Lord which throws light upon the meaning of this Word from the Cross. Some three years before, in the late springtime, he had been seated, wearied with His journey, upon the curb of a well outside the little Samaritan city of Sychar. His disciples had gone into the town to buy food; but when they returned He refused to eat, saying, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." "My meat"—that which gives me life and sustenance

—is to do His will, and not only to do it from time to time, but to carry it out to the end, “to finish His work.” And now on the Cross. His earthly life is near to its close, He can say, “It is finished.” Our Lord did not mean, merely, that His life and work were coming to an end. The word means far more than that. It has the significance, rather, of something accomplished, consummated, brought to the highest point of achievement. This was a cry of triumph, a declaration of victory.

But it might be objected, and indeed has been, that it was not finished, for not even now, after nearly two thousand years, is the reign of Christ established wholly upon the earth. The powers of evil are strong; and still the Church must pray, “Thy Kingdom come.” But what was the work of God that Jesus said was finished? The work which His Father gave Him to do, and which He consummated on the Cross, was that of making a beginning. In the prologue to his book about the Acts of the Apostles, St. Luke refers to the Gospel, which he had formerly written for his friend, Theophilus, as a record of the things which “Jesus began both to do and teach.” Now he proposes to give a record of how that work was carried on by the faithful apostles. The great work of redemption which Jesus wrought is not to be brought to its consummation until the end of time; and men in every age are called upon to co-operate with the Holy Spirit in bringing that work of His toward that consummation. The night in which He appeared to them all, after He was risen from the dead, was marked by the delivery to them of a great commission: “As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.” Those words were addressed to us as truly as they were to the eleven gathered in that upper room in Jerusalem.

In one of His discourses to His disciples during this week, He outlined the plan that was to be fulfilled. “The Son of Man,” He said, “is as a man taking a journey into a far

country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants *and to every man his work.*" What a joyful and solemn trust is committed to us. No drifting through life; no taking the line of least resistance; but, since we are to give an account of our stewardship when the Master of the house returns, our work must needs be laid out according to a plan, and nothing permitted to take precedence of it. This is the one thing that matters eternally. Life, at which I have but one chance and no more, will be a success or a failure in the measure in which I fulfill my part in the task that the love and confidence of the Master allots to me.

In order to find what my part may be in the work begun by Christ, I do not need to wander far afield. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." The test lies in the forum of conscience. He who follows conscience cannot fail. That inner voice is the voice of the Holy Spirit; and the more faithfully we respond to it, the more clearly, as time goes by, we shall be able to recognize and follow His guiding. Let me make one invariable rule of life—never under any circumstances, and no matter what the cost may be, to violate my own conscience. Only that way lies safety and final achievement.

Life is made up of what the world regards as little things; but nothing can be small or petty in the service of God. The fact that God gives us a duty to perform makes that duty infinitely great. His touch magnifies it, and lifts it up to another plane. It becomes the part of His eternal purpose in which we are to be the artificers. It may seem so unimportant that we ourselves may not remember it a week hence; but if it be something which conscience has directed, it can never be forgotten in the Kingdom of God. Out of my faithfulness I shall be able to draw strength in every future call that His love may make upon me. My meat will be found in doing the will of Him who sent me, in finishing the work He has ordained for me to do.

PRAYER

O Lord Jesus Christ, divine Lover of poor sinners, increase my faith; teach me to pray; show me the Father, that I may find a joyous service in Thee, to serve whom is to reign.

The Seventh Word from the Cross

Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.—St. Luke 23:46

Our Lord was not subject to death in the sense in which we commonly use the expression. Death was not for Him “the inevitable hour.” He made this clear in His prophecy of how He would lay down His life for His sheep. “I lay down my life that I may take it again,” He said. “No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” The evangelists had no doubt of this; they describe His death as His own deliberate act—“He yielded up the ghost”—and this interpretation has persisted through all the ages. The ancient hymn of Sedulius declares, “Death did not approach Christ, but Christ approached death,” and St. Augustine says, “He died because He willed it, when He willed it, and as He willed it.” It came not for Him; He pursued it and found it.

His “act of death” was preparatory to the laying aside of all earthly limitation; it was the casting away of the girdle of infirmity with which He girded Himself when He came into the world. To Him, as it should be to us, death was the great liberator. To the Christian “life, like a dome of many-colored glass, stains the white radiance of eternity until death tramples it to fragments.”

But such a death depends upon the life which we, through the guidance of the Spirit, are able to live. Death, as a rule, is governed by life. As a matter of fact, we do not hear of

many death-bed repentances. The vast majority of people in the world die as they have lived. No deep change comes over the soul when the last hour approaches. Those who have lived with indifference to the call of God's love, generally pass out of this life in that same condition of indifference. Nothing happens in the last extremity to jar them out of their spiritual lethargy. The Holy Spirit whom they have grieved and resisted will not force their wills. Even the Tempter desires them to remain as they are. He will not affright and disturb them by any final assault.

On the other hand, the man who has been accustomed through life to commending himself and all his work to God; who has sought ever to do all in and through Him; who has looked to Him for strength and guidance in every task; and who has given Him the glory in everything accomplished—will have so cultivated the spirit of oblation that instinctively he will turn to God in that hour when the great and final commendation is to be made. And in that hour such a man's soul will find the everlasting peace. "The four Gospels," said devout old Theodor Bengel, "are four voices which together make up one thrilling symphony"; and the symphony for them that love and obey is a symphony of peace.

We have spoken of the contrasts on Calvary, and there is no greater contrast than that which we find between this final scene and the one that went before it. A little while ago there was the railing and blasphemy, the jeers and taunting, the darkened heavens and the dread muttering of earthquake; there was the loud cry of desolation from the darkened soul of the divine Victim. Now peace reigns. The clamant multitude, terrified by the convulsions of Nature which can not look upon the death of its God and Maker, have returned to the city. Only the guard of soldiers, now awed and wondering, and the little group at the foot of the Cross, remain. The divine lips move

once more; the Mother presses forward to catch the last words. They come, full of a simplicity of trust such as her memory might recall in Him as long ago He lay, a little child, in her arms, in the house at Nazareth: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

His head is bowed upon his breast. Jesus is dead. But in this death there is no sting, for in it lies the pledge of life, life unending. We lay Jesus in the tomb, but with no such wordless grief as the disciples felt on that first Good Friday evening, for we come back from Calvary with our hearts thrilled by expectation of joy. We know the outcome, the triumph, the redemption. "I am the resurrection and the life," saith the Lord. "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me, shall never die."

"It was not possible that He should be holden of death," said St. Peter in his great Pentecostal sermon; and if we are one with Him, neither will it be possible that we should be holden of death. We shall die as He died; we shall go down into the grave even as He went into the grave; we shall rise again even as He rose on Easter morning; we shall ascend into heaven as He ascended; and the glory which He has in the presence of His Father, He will not withhold from us.

PRAYER

O bright and glorious day, wherein there is no sorrow, wherein there is untroubled gladness, all manner of good, and all my heart's desire; where life shall be calm and glad; where no enemy shall enter, nor breath of temptation; where is sweet, supreme security, where is the Blessed Trinity, the blissful Vision of the Godhead, and joy unending with my Lord! O joy transcending every joy! When shall I come to Thee, O Lord, and see Thy glory? How long, O Lord, wilt Thou say to me, Tarry yet a little while.

Take and receive, O Lord, my entire liberty, my understanding, my whole will. All that I am, all that I have, Thou hast given me. I now give it back again to Thee, to be disposed of according to Thy good pleasure. Only give to me Thy love and Thy grace; with these I shall be rich enough.

—*St. Ignatius Loyola*

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